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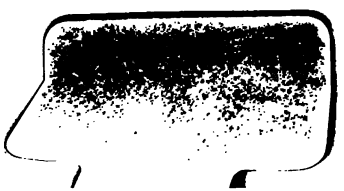
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Catherine Grown Older



CATHERINE GROWN OLDER.

CATHERINE GROWN OLDER:

A Sequel to

CATHERINE HAMILTON.

BY

M. F. S.

AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF THE SAINTS FOR CHILDREN," "TOM'S CRUCIFIX AND OTHER TALES," "CATHERINE HAMILTON," ETC.

"Oh fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long—
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong."



London:
R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1875.

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to

LISA AND LUCY.

CATHERINE GROWN OLDER.

Chapter I.

IT was early autumn—every gust of wind brought down a shower of leaves upon the thickly-strewn pathway, yet the sunshine was warm and pleasant, and Catherine Hamilton, sitting at her open window, looked out at the pretty view of open country, and thought that truly there was "no place like home."

It was a very happy time for Catherine. She had gone through all the pleasures and all the trials of school-days, and now she was just sixteen years old, and had returned to Fairfield, no longer a little girl home for the

holidays, but a young lady, ready to take part in the society of the world—*her* little world, in the old county town where she had been born, and where every one knew and loved the name of Hamilton.

Certainly there was a little pain at leaving the convent, and the nuns who had watched over her so carefully for several years, but Catherine was light-hearted, and the anticipation of change overcame all her regrets; so though a few tears had fallen when the Mother Superior kissed and blessed her as she bade her farewell, they had disappeared into bright smiles a moment after, and Catherine was pouring out questions and remarks in breathless haste during the greater part of her journey home.

"Mamma, I am going to be so useful to you," she said, when nearly every other subject was exhausted. "I can teach Winnie quite well, I am sure; and I will attend to the housekeeping, and you shall have nothing at *all to do but read* and work and be quiet."

Mrs. Hamilton smiled. She said nothing, for no answer was waited for; but her thought was that the housekeeping would fare ill in such very inexperienced hands as Catherine's, and probably Winnie's education would proceed more steadily under a less impulsive teacher. The train whirled along, and Cathy's tongue kept pace with it, until both were stopped by the arrival at the station; and then there was a great bustle of collecting packages and wrappers together, and seeing after luggage, until at length Catherine, her mother, and all their belongings, were being conveyed to Fairfield in the carriage which had come down to meet them.

"Ah, there is old Stevens, the postman, coming up the road—look, mamma, he sees me," cried Catherine, with her head half out at the window; "and there is little Pat Riley at the cottage gate." And so, recognizing one and another of the familiar faces, they drove along the road and reached the open gates of Fairfield, where the servants and

Winifred and Cyril were waiting to welcome them home.

About half an hour later, Catherine was in her own room, in the midst of half-unpacked trunks and boxes, while old nurse and Winnie were helping to put the contents into the chest of drawers in some order, all three tongues going fast and merrily the while.

"It is so nice to be at home," said Catherine, as she ran down the staircase into the dining-room to tea, and it was her last waking thought before she slept that night. So we come back to the autumn wind blowing about the leaves on the garden paths, while Catherine Hamilton sat watching them, enjoying the sunshine and brightness. She had been home some three weeks then, and felt quite settled down, but somehow she had not begun to put into execution all the plans of activity and usefulness she made on her return—it seemed as if the days slipped by without anything special being done in them, and Catherine did not feel particularly

inclined to practise the rule of reading and study, work and recreation, which the sisters at the convent had advised her to keep to. They were still early days at home, and there were friends to visit and be visited by—that was the excuse which Mrs. Hamilton made for Catherine; yet when she told her that it was now time to occupy herself usefully some part of the day, Cathy felt strangely disinclined for it. There was nothing she loved better than reading, but then it must be mixed up with a great deal of happy dreaming and musing, such as she had been indulging in that day at the open window, drawing in imagination bright, glowing pictures of her future life.

However, Catherine roused up with a start to read a letter which had come to her that day from the convent—a letter containing so much advice, so much loving interest, that it set her thinking in a different way, and after a while sent her across the room to fetch her little "Imitation of Christ," which had been

given her when she left. All her life, since she had been old enough to understand it, Catherine had known the book well; but now, as she turned over the pages, they brought memories of some of the quiet talks she had had with her favourite among the sisters at the convent. Many a time words had been spoken then which she could not put away, and yet which half frightened her—words which told of something far more to be desired than the happiness of the world, of the sweetness of sacrifice, the joy of suffering. And now it seemed as if Sister Mary Aloysius was by her side as she read, "To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee if thou art resolved to love Jesus, and constantly follow Him." What hard words those were! In spite of a good many faults, of a certain love of excitement and pleasure, which had often brought an anxious thought to those who loved and watched her, Catherine *had* resolved to love Jesus. Deeply in her heart there was a firm *intention* of following Him, only she wished—

as she had wished in childish days—that it was easy. The mention of a rough hard path made her hesitate and fear, while a strong hope came that God would not require such service from her, that He would make her way smooth and bright, so there should be neither danger nor difficulty in pleasing Him.

Every one did not have much to suffer. Why she could name a great many people—very good people, too—who seemed always happy and comfortable, and Catherine hoped she could be one of those; for, although she was scarcely conscious of it, her desire was to cling to the world with one hand, while the other was held out to God.

However, such troublesome thoughts would come out of the words of S. Thomas à Kempis, that Catherine put the book aside, and went into the garden to divert herself; and there she was soon joined by her old companion, Mary Leslie, who was so delighted to get her back again, that she scarcely knew how to keep away from her.

They were soon busily talking over all the people in the neighbourhood, how old friends were changed or gone, and whether new arrivals were nice people or otherwise.

"Mary, I want to know who that girl is I saw at church on Sunday, in the seat behind the Birds'."

"Tall, and fair hair?" inquired Mary; and Catherine nodded assent.

"Oh, I know who you mean—her name is Lindsay. They came to live here about six months ago; but I don't like them much."

"Do they visit you?"

"O dear no!" replied Mary, with a peculiar tone in her voice. "They visit no one, and particularly wish to make no acquaintances. I suppose no one is good enough to associate with them."

Catherine's face showed her annoyance. The idea of any one declining to know her family or her friends was one she felt ready to resent warmly, and there was a marked *difference* in the tone of her next question.

"Who was that dowdy-looking creature by her side?"

"That is Mrs. Lindsay, the mother. There is a little girl about ten years of age besides this Marion, who is I suppose quite seventeen; and then there is Mr. Lindsay, but he is not often visible. Altogether there is something very strange about them, *I* think, keeping to themselves, and not speaking to any one. Father Austin calls there, and he seems to like them; but no one else knows who they are."

"Well, I am sure they are welcome to keep out of the way, as far as I am concerned," said Catherine. "I don't like the look of them at all."

Now this was not the exact truth, for Catherine had really taken a great fancy to the tall, quiet-looking girl whom she had noticed at Mass on the previous Sunday. It was only since Mary's unfavourable account that she had begun to think there was something to be disliked even in the appearance of

the Lindsays, and to resolve to take every opportunity of showing that she had no desire to make their acquaintance.

Just at this point in the conversation Winnie came running to say tea was ready, and Mary Leslie was easily persuaded to remain. Not many minutes after they had been seated, Catherine, happening to glance towards the window, saw the subject of their recent discussion passing along the road with her younger sister. Winifred caught sight of them too, and said,—

"Oh, mamma, there is that nice little Clara Lindsay going by. I do wish you would let her come and see me some day."

Before Mrs. Hamilton could reply, Catherine had exclaimed,—

"How absurd, Winnie, to want that child. Why she must be several years younger than you: besides, you know quite well her parents would not let her come near *us*."

Mrs. Hamilton looked up quickly. "My *dear* Catherine, what can you know about

the Lindsays? They are perfect strangers here, and have only lived in the town a few months."

"Well, mamma, I can only judge by what I see," said Catherine, with a very competent air. "I am sure the manner in which they go into church alone is sufficient to show they think themselves better than anybody there. I think that Miss Lindsay is one of the most proud, disagreeable-looking girls I ever saw, and I am sure she has nothing to be proud of that *I* can make out."

Mrs. Hamilton looked vexed. "I do hope, Catherine, you are not in the habit of talking of your neighbours. It is not charitable, and you little know what harm such words may do."

"Uncharitable, mamma? Why, I am sure I did not speak against these Lindsays. I only said they thought they were better than the rest of us; and that every one knows by their keeping so to themselves."

"Well, I do not wish to hear what every one

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knows," said Mrs. Hamilton. "Father Austen says they are very good, quiet people. Suppose we talk of something else."

However, conversation flagged a good deal after that, and no one was sorry when tea was over and there was a general move. Catherine went with Mary to the gate, and as they stood for a few last words together, she exclaimed,—

"Wasn't mamma vexed at what I said about those people? I am sure I would not be uncharitable for the world, but really it is hard if one can't say a word in one's own house about a thing which is known to all the neighbourhood."

"I do believe everything one does say will be put down to want of charity," replied Mary. "Mamma is just the same. She would have said I had done wrong in prejudicing you against this Marion Lindsay; but I am sure I did not, did I, dear? I only told you what I knew."

"Of course," said Catherine. "Well,

good-night, Mary. Try and come to-morrow, and we will have a walk, if mamma can spare me." And then the friends parted, each having some uneasy feelings in her own heart which were very hard to put down.

"I wonder whether I was wrong in speaking so of that girl?" thought Catherine, when she was preparing for rest that night. If she had been quite honest with herself she would not have "wondered" at all, but would have owned her unkindness both in thought and speech. As it was, she particularly wished to convince herself that she had not sinned against charity; and so she settled it with her conscience that it was only a very slight fault, and one which could not possibly do any harm.

But when she was in bed, the subject came up again in Catherine's mind, and she felt irritated with herself and every one else, wishing there were not such very strict rules of right and wrong.

"It is so hard to be always watching one's

words and thoughts," she said to herself. "Oh, dear, I want to be good and to keep near to God, but I really do not think I could take up that constant fighting with myself which Sister Mary Aloysius talked so much about. I am so young, and I want to be very happy, and enjoy myself; and I can't be expected to be always controlling my tongue and my thoughts, and giving up pleasures and all that. It is one thing for saints to do, but I am called to a lower way." And with that conclusion reached, Catherine, still half-doubtful, settled herself to sleep; and yet those troublesome words she had lighted on in the afternoon were her last waking thoughts,—"To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee if thou art resolved to love Jesus."

Chapter II.

THE September moon shone brightly down on field and flower, on pretty country houses and tall trees and sloping lawns, and it glanced in at the windows of the house of the Lindsays, lighting up the pale young face of Marion as she looked out.

"It is so lovely, so peaceful — I never thought I could care for a new home as I do for this," she murmured to herself. "Yet I have got to leave it all and go away. I wonder if God really does ask me! Yes, I believe He does, I *know* He does: it is only a temptation which makes me hesitate and feel ready to draw back, and yet it is more natural to stay and be a comfort to my father and mother. Poor mamma! — she

can't speak of my going, without the tears coming into her eyes. I could be so useful to Clara, too, as she grows older. O dear, I have resolved I will *not* let these thoughts come, for I have prayed to do right, and God seems to ask me to give all up for Him—I am told so by one whom I can trust, I feel it myself, when I pray—yet I am hesitating and doubting like this! Oh, how unfit I am to give myself to God, and He has done so much for me;" and Marion Lindsay turned from the moonlight to her crucifix—that crucifix which told of a love which gave up all, of a full and entire sacrifice, and as she knelt before it she grew calm and trustful again.

Not many people would have guessed the deep warm feelings which were hidden by the quiet manner which caused many persons to call the eldest, Miss Lindsay cold and proud—and fewer still would have supposed that a great struggle was going on *in the* soul of the girl who moved about

her home as calmly as if she had no thought beyond the daily round of little family duties and pleasures. From a very young child she had been different to her playmates, so self-controlled, so thoughtful, that it gave her the manner of one far older than her years; and the love of God which had early filled her heart had grown and deepened into one intense desire to be all His, to give up home and parents and all else for His sake, and follow Jesus in poverty and humiliation until death. There might be some who would say that to Marion Lindsay there was nothing of sacrifice in this resolve, which was but the fulfilment of the early hope of her childish days. *God* knew the agony of heart with which she sometimes watched her mother's face, her mother's tears when the approaching separation was spoken of; the fear, the doubt, the temptation of many a waking night, which made up the sacrifice she was about to offer to Him.

It had been for the reason of Marion's decision as to her future life that Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay had sought a new home among strangers; to the mother's heart it would be almost impossible to stay in the old house where she had watched the baby steps, heard the little ringing infant voice of her first child, when that child was gone for ever.

So they came to the pretty midland county a few months before Marion was to go, just that a little memory of her sweet gentle presence might linger about the place when she left them, without the pain of older recollections.

"We will keep quietly to ourselves, Marion," Mrs. Lindsay had said, when first they settled in their new abode. "It is useless for you to make fresh acquaintances in the world, and I do not wish for any." And thus it was that the Lindsay family were said to keep to themselves and be so very reserved, by those who knew nothing of the reason. If

Catherine Hamilton had only known the suffering, and also the sweet secret joy of Marion Lindsay's heart, she would have sympathized with the warmth of her impulsive nature; but she did *not* know, and the consequence was that, from the evening upon which Mary Leslie and she had discussed the new-comer, she felt a growing dislike and prejudice to the girl who was so unconscious of it.

Now and then it happened that the two young ladies met in the town or at the church door, and the idea had flashed through Marion's mind that the bright happy Miss Hamilton she admired so much, looked at her with a strangely contemptuous glance. However, she put the thought aside as one that was wrong and suspicious, scolding herself very much for ever letting it enter her head.

Meantime the feeling of the young folks in the town ran high against the Lindsays. Catherine Hamilton was a general favourite,

and she had declared them to be disagreeable people, who kept aloof from others through some fancied superiority. Mary Leslie said that Miss Lindsay thought herself a saint, and would never dream of speaking to such ordinary characters as the girls of her own age who lived about that part. Every one of the young ladies had some ill-natured remark to make, and so, from one thing to another, the prejudice grew so strong, that even older and wiser people got an idea that there was something suspicious about this family, and spoke of them, when they *did* speak, with mysterious looks and shakes of the head.

Things might have gone on thus for ever, without the victims of this gossip being aware of what was said against them, had not the little Clara been sent to a school in the neighbourhood, where she met with several children from the Catholic families of the town. When she came home, crying bitterly because no one would play with her,

and when she complained that the other little girls whispered together about Marion, Mrs. Lindsay knew for the first time how greatly they were disliked. She tried to comfort Clara, and preached patience and courage; but still she grieved for her children's sake, and began to regret having left her earlier friends, to settle among these unkindly strangers.

"Mary," said Catherine Hamilton one day, "do you know that Marion Lindsay is going to be a Sister of Mercy, and it is half breaking her mother's heart? She imagines herself on the high road to perfection, I suppose; but I am sure it would be far more pleasing to God if she did her duty at home."

"Oh, Catherine, how do you know? Is it really true?" cried Mary Leslie. "I am not one bit surprised: she is just the sort of girl who wouldn't mind breaking anybody's heart so long as she pleased herself."

"Well, I know it is true, for Father Austen said so. He was at our house last night, and

he told us that she was going, and that her mother was heart-broken."

Now what Father Austen really had said, was in answer to Mrs. Hamilton's inquiry "if Mrs. Lindsay did not feel her daughter's leaving very much?" and he had replied, "She wishes it with all her heart, but the sacrifice costs her a great deal, and she is suffering much." However, Catherine had not been trying to be very accurate of late, and so she was not fully conscious of the untruthfulness of the impression she had conveyed. Very quickly it got circulated amongst the congregation of the little Catholic Church that Miss Lindsay was about to enter religion entirely against the will of her parents; and many said — with truth — that self-chosen sacrifices were never valuable to God, and that a disobedient daughter would never become a good nun. Fortunately this rumour reached the ears of Father Austen, and after some difficulty and the loss of much time he traced it to Catherine Hamilton. When he came into the drawing-room at

Fairfield one afternoon, looking both sad and stern, it reminded Catherine of a day, long years before, when he had bidden her come with him to that very room, to hear the news of her father's death; only this time there was an evident displeasure even in the tone of his voice, as he said, "I am glad to see you alone, Catherine, I have something important to say to you."

She never guessed what was coming—Catherine was too thoughtless in her gossip, too childish to know how words travel and multiply, so she never imagined that her untruthful repetition of Father Austen's speech had been traced back to her at last; but she could tell that something very unpleasant was in the air, and she turned hot and cold, red and white, as she sat down, waiting for the priest to speak.

With all her faults, Catherine was not deceitful, and it only required a few questions to bring out the whole truth—what she had said, and to whom she had said it. But it

was then for the first time that her motives were laid bare to herself. She had never looked them fairly in the face, never seen how mean, how envious, how spiteful they were; and now her sin stood out clearly in her sight, and she shuddered to see what she had been doing — how she had played with her conscience, and contented herself in confession with vague accusations of being uncharitable, while the Heart of Jesus was being wounded habitually and constantly through her want of love, and want of common justice to one whom He loved, and for whom He had died.

Sorrow would not convey an idea of Catherine's distress—her eyes once opened to see what she had been doing, nothing could exceed her grief, and her willingness to make reparation. Therefore when Father Austen required her to unsay her words, and give the correct statement to all those whom she had spoken to, she never thought of difficulty or shame, but rushed to Mary Leslie at once,

confessing with many tears and self-accusations what she had done.

"O Mary, I can never forgive myself," she cried. "Father Austen says that Marion Lindsay is so good, so humble, and I have told every one she is proud, and thinks herself a saint. And he says she is suffering so much in giving up her home, and yet she is ready to bear it all for our Lord; and all the while I have been sneering at her, and influencing ever so many people against her. The very worst of it is that I have really been telling downright untruths, without seeming to know it. What a wretch I must be," added Catherine, impulsively. "I am going straight to Marion, to tell her what I have done."

"Oh, Catherine, surely Father Austen did not say you must," inquired Mary.

"I asked him if I ought not; and he said certainly it would be right, because Marion had heard of these things."

"But Catherine—she will think so badly of you," suggested Mary Leslie.

"I don't care what she thinks—she can't think worse of me than I do of myself. O Mary, I don't believe I could expect God's pardon until I have done all in my power to show I am really sorry."

Mary watched her friend go with a stronger feeling of admiration than she had ever felt for her before. Catherine's readiness to humble herself made a deep impression on her, for she knew well enough that it would have been long before *she* could have brought herself to own such a fault. Neither was her own conscience at ease — all kinds of remarks made upon the Lindsays came back to her now, which she wished unsaid, and she was inclined to believe that she deserved as much blame as Catherine, but unfortunately for herself she had neither generosity nor high principle enough to own to it.

Excited feelings and her impulsive nature were carrying Cathy Hamilton through her difficulties to a very great extent, yet when she really stood upon the steps of Mr. Lind-

say's house, waiting for the door to be opened, she felt desperately inclined to run away. However, she stood her ground, and managed to ask for Marion in a very low and faltering voice. The servant looked somewhat surprised to see a stranger, but showed her into the drawing-room, and there Catherine had to sit for a few moments, which seemed hours, until the door opened and Marion Lindsay appeared, looking almost more alarmed than herself.

Poor Cathy had composed several sentences with which to begin her tale, as she came along, but now the moment for speech had arrived, every idea seemed to have flown out of her head. She blushed, she stammered, she coughed, but not one word came to her usually ready tongue, and all she did was to burst into a violent fit of crying.



Chapter III.

PERHAPS it was the best thing Catherine could have done; perhaps it was a more certain way of getting forgiveness than any long explanations or entreaties. At any rate, before five minutes were gone, the two girls sat hand-in-hand, as if they had been old friends, while Cathy's tears were nearly all dried up, and she only dropped a few at intervals in their conversation.

Marion Lindsay did not want to hear what she had said and thought. It was enough for her to feel that whatever animosity there had been was ended now; and so, in spite of Catherine's repeated efforts to tell the extent of her long unkindness, she persisted in speaking of other things, and in a very short

time had succeeded so completely in changing the subject, that her visitor was talking as brightly as was her custom.

"And Marion—I may call you so, may I not?—do you really like to go and be a Sister of Mercy? Of course it is very good and beautiful, and all that; but I should be so dreadfully afraid of getting tired of it—I should indeed. You see I have been at school at a convent, and I was very happy there, and the nuns were such dear good creatures; but I never did think I should like to be one of them, that is, not till I begin to get old."

Marion smiled slightly. It was not very easy to speak of herself and the life she longed for, still she made an effort to return Catherine's confidence, and said—

"I do really wish with all my heart to enter religion. It has been part of my life as long as I can remember anything. No, I am not afraid of getting tired of it;" and such an *expression* of trust and hope rested on the

quiet face, that Catherine afterwards declared to Mary Leslie that she looked "like an angel." "I could not get tired of being with our Lord always, when I know it is the place He has chosen for me."

"Still, it must be very hard to go away from your home and your friends. I think it would half break my heart if it were me." But Catherine repented her words as soon as they were said, when she saw the pained expression which flitted across Marion's face, the quick tight pressure of her small hands together, as if the thought was more than she could dwell on.

It *was* a sacrifice, then; and the feeling came to Catherine that there by her side was one more who had early taken up the Cross, who had begun to follow Jesus in suffering; while she was longing for ease and brightness, for admiration and love, which He put far from Him. All the way home Cathy thought more seriously than was usual with her. She thought of herself, of the pain she

had been giving to the Master whom she professed to love, of the pride, the envy, the want of charity which she had found in her heart, and which had brought forth fruit in sinful words and actions, and it seemed that she could trace it all back to a slight beginning,—to a gradual lowering of her standard of right and wrong, to an increasing carelessness in little things, and a want of sincere self-examination. In a word, she had been going backward, and now she must begin once more to keep all the resolutions she had made on her return home, with a very painful and humbling sense of failure.

Then Catherine thought of the young girl she had left, whose look and voice even seemed to tell that she lived very near to God, and enthusiastic admiration having taken the place of her intense dislike, she rushed in upon her mother with the vehement declaration that "Marion Lindsay was a saint!"

Mrs. Hamilton looked up, slightly startled.

"How hot your cheeks are, dear, and you seem so wild and excited. What can have happened?"

"Mamma, I'll tell you the whole history, although I am terribly ashamed of it. I have been to see Marion Lindsay, and I am quite sure she is a saint."

"My dear Catherine, what could take you to any stranger's house alone, and without mentioning it to me? And I really do object to the way so many of you young girls have of calling people you admire 'saints.' Say they are very holy, very good, if you like; but do pray remember that a saint is something too great and too glorious to be spoken of so lightly—one who is among the blessed in heaven, and invoked by the Church on earth."

"Oh, mamma, dear, if you would please not take things so seriously—just now, at least. You don't know what a terrible afternoon I have had, and I want to tell you about it." And then Catherine, who was beginning to

feel the reaction after her excitement, put her head down on her mother's lap, as she had done when she was a little tiny child, and, amidst sobs and entreaties "not to be angry," told out her tale.

Mrs. Hamilton was too kind and too wise to add to her child's load of self-reproach. She rather encouraged her to thank God for showing her the sinfulness of her heart, even by such means, and begged her to be more watchful and prayerful for the future.

"Yes, mamma, I mean to begin quite differently. And I am sure I have thought too much of my comfort and happiness, and I have loved to enjoy myself, and to be praised and thought much of, so I have grown proud and self-complacent. I wish I was one-half as good as Marion Lindsay. Really, mamma, perhaps I am not able to resist the temptations of the world, and I ought to go into religion!" and Catherine raised her head with sudden animation, as if a new and not unpleasant thought had suggested itself.

It was just like her—*so* like, that Mrs. Hamilton scarcely smiled, although she might have been excused for doing so, as she answered: "Dear child, do leave yourself in God's hands, and try to be faithful to Him in little things every day. It is quite certain that as yet He has not called you to belong to Him in religion."

"Well, no," said Catherine, reflectively. "To tell you the truth, mamma, it has been the very life I always disliked to think of. It only came into my head just then that it would be a way of avoiding a great many temptations."

"Temptations of another kind would come, Catherine. You would take *yourself* into a convent with your faulty sinful nature, and holiness would only come there, as here, by much prayer and striving. Depend on one thing, my child. You will only be happy if you walk in the path God points you to, and He will make it plain some day."

Catherine pondered the subject in her own

mind, although she said no more, and rose next morning with so firm a resolve to correct her worldly tastes, that she routed out a very plain black frock—a remnant of convent days —and came down to breakfast with such flattened hair and absence of any ornament, that Mrs. Hamilton gazed in utter surprise, while Winnie and Cyril burst into uncontrollable laughter.

"Oh, isn't she a guy!" cried Cyril; and Winnie exclaimed, "You do look so very very funny, Cathy," and then fairly rolled on the sofa in a fresh fit of giggling.

It was hard for Catherine to maintain a suitable composure of manner. Certainly it proved that the old fiery temper of childhood had been subdued, if other faults were strong, for she said not a word, but went to her usual place at the table, and began cutting bread as unconcernedly as she could.

"My dear girl, what has made you appear in that shabby old frock, which is ever so much too small for you?"

Catherine blushed. "Mamma, I want to give up caring so much about dress."

"But you need not, for that reason, give up neatness, dear. Pray go and put on your usual morning dress the moment you have finished your breakfast. I am sure it is very simple and plain."

Catherine felt rather disappointed, her intention had been so good, and now cold water was thrown upon it—by Mamma, too, who was always so ready to sympathise with every wish! Well, it was a trial, a real, positive trial—so thought Catherine, and that idea was her only consolation as she retired to put on the dress which she had resolved to discard for ever.

"Dear Catherine, how really good and well-meaning she is. I am quite sure she will come very near to God when a few years have passed over her head, and she has learned a little discretion," Mrs. Hamilton said to Father Austen, who came in that day, and heard of Catherine's new freak.

If the young lady had but known how he laughed, I doubt whether she would so quickly have taken him into her confidence; but as he walked down to the garden-gate on leaving Mrs. Hamilton, he heard his name called rather breathlessly, and looking round, beheld Catherine running after him, with very hot cheeks and excited eyes.

"Father Austen, do please stop. There is something I want to say to you."

"Better let it wait," said the priest, with a smile which was half provoking, for he guessed what was coming. "I have two or three sick calls to make, Catherine."

"Oh, I can't wait, indeed, Father. It is something important—*very important indeed.*"

"Oh, really! Well, that alters the case. Out with it;" and Father Austen's haste seemed forgotten, for he turned round, and walked back towards the house in a slow, deliberate manner, which took an immense amount of Catherine's enthusiasm out of her. A moment before she had been all eagerness

to talk—now, with Father Austen looking like that, it seemed as if her subject had grown flat and tame, and she was half inclined to turn from him with a stamp of the foot, such as she would have given ten years before, if any one teazed her.

"Well!" said the priest, drily.

Then Cathy made a great effort, and said: "Father, I have begun to think that perhaps I have a vocation for religion."

"Have you, really! Then I recommend you to dismiss such a foolish thought from your mind at once, for I am sure you have not the very slightest suspicion of a vocation. Is that all you wanted to say to me?"

Catherine did not wait to answer "yes." She just turned, and rushed from him, down, down, down to the very end of the garden, where she had resorted many a time in childish difficulties, with her tears flowing fast. She could not throw herself in the long grass now. There *was* no long grass, for it had been cut in summer, and now it

Chapter IV.

MARY LESLIE always declared that from the very day of Catherine's visit to Marion Lindsay their own old intimacy of so many years began to grow cool; and certainly she had some reason on her side, for even the servants at Elm-bank said how seldom Miss Hamilton came now to see Miss Mary.

The fact was that Cathy felt an irresistible attraction to Marion's quiet, unpretending goodness, and the knowledge that their acquaintance must at most be very brief, caused her to spend all the time she could in the society of the girl she had formerly disliked and despised.

At that time the little "Imitation" was

opened more frequently than ever. Even the chapter which had once seemed so distasteful was read and thought over, and some faint glimmering perception of the happiness of following in the "royal road of the cross" entered Catherine's heart. At any rate, she felt that *if* God called her to suffering of whatever kind, she should not like to refuse Him — she *could* not when she thought of Christ, the cross-bearer! Catherine's giddiness was toning down wonderfully now; her very impulses were held in check as they had never been before; she only did wish so very very much that she knew what God was going to do with her! There was Marion Lindsay—only a year and a half older than herself, with her future life all plain before her.

Mary Leslie — who was even younger — had quite decided to be a "young lady of the world," with anticipations of coming out into society. Her own brother Frank *was at* college, studying for the priesthood.

Everybody seemed looking forward to something specially their own, except her, and she—well, she did not care now for gaiety and parties. Papa was dead, and mamma could not very well take her into the world, and yet nobody thought she had any vocation to be a nun, and it was very hard indeed.

This was the direction Cathy's thoughts took as she sat dreaming over her work sometimes, and then she would rouse up with a great start, to remember that it was the hour to do some special thing; and, in spite of the old exclamation, "bother," rising to her lips, she seldom uttered it, but ran off to fulfil the duty or employment which called her.

"I wish I had something I must do," Catherine had said more than once to her new friend. "You see, Marion, at school there were lessons, and fixed hours for them, but at home it is so very different, and all my resolutions end in doing nothing, because I scarcely know what to be at."

"But, Catherine dear, surely you need not be idle just because you have left school. Why don't you give yourself a set of duties, and try to do them at fixed hours?"

"Oh, I shouldn't keep to it. If I said I would practise an hour every day, I should probably do it twice in a week, because half the other days I shouldn't feel in the mood for it."

Marion smiled — the faint smile which Catherine well understood, and which made her exclaim, "Now, don't look like that! I know what you mean, so you may as well say it out."

"But there is no need to say it, if you know already, Catherine."

"You meant that I ought to do the things I fix on, no matter whether I am in the mood or not. Sister Mary Aloysius told me the same over and over again. Oh dear, I had cart-loads of good advice when I was coming home, and I know it is all true, *but yet I* don't follow it."

"Suppose then you begin—you were wishing just now for something to do."

"Yes; but I didn't mean disagreeable things like practising. It would be so much nicer to do something fresh. But seriously, Marion, I would make a rule for myself, only how *could* I keep to it? Just at the very moment I was going to read, or study, or work, mamma might want me to go out, or some visitor would come in."

"Then you could break your rule for the sake of pleasing your mamma, and very likely make it up later in the day."

"Oh, Marion, you really do find an answer for everything. It would not be a rule at all if I did not keep to it."

"Dear Catherine, don't you see that it is one thing to break a rule for your own gratification, and quite another to do so to fulfil some positive duty? Now, while you are a girl at home, it *must* be a duty to be always ready to do what Mrs. Hamilton wants, whether it is to go out or receive a

visitor; and there would be more self-denial in yielding to her wishes quietly, without talking about it, than in doing anything else, however good."

Catherine pondered over it all for a few moments, and then said, "Really, Marion, you are as wise as an old nun; you're not a bit like a girl. However, I will take your advice, and I will even put in that hateful practising. Will that please you?"

"Yes, very much — if you keep to it," said Marion, laughing, as she bid her friend good-bye.

That very afternoon Catherine retreated to her own room, and opening her desk, put on it a large sheet of paper, and wrote in very clear round letters at the top, "Rule of Life;" and then, folding her hands, she went off into a most agreeable dream of what she would do — if she was somebody else! The clock striking four roused her to a fresh effort, and she wrote, "*Rise at* 7 a. m." "I don't think I'll put

that down," was the thought which followed. "It seems to bind me to getting up at that particular moment, and I *am* so sleepy in the morning. It would be a splendid opportunity for self-denial, though. O dear, I wish I liked denying myself, but I don't. However, I suppose there *would* be no self-denial if it was pleasant. I really never shall get on with my rule at this rate, though;" and the end was that Catherine *did* fix on the 7 o'clock rising, and on other duties which were rather distasteful, comforting herself by reflecting that after all she need not keep on if it was too hard—this was only an experiment!

At first starting, Cathy's rule seemed likely to upset the household arrangements. Then came the contrary temptation to hold to it very loosely, and think that trifling unfaithfulnesses were of no consequence; but after a while her really good-will helped her to keep up the effort, which before long grew *almost* a pleasure.

Among Catherine's choice of occupations she had fixed upon one hour's plain sewing — partly because she wanted to conquer her dislike to it, partly because her untidiness in the care of her own clothing was the occasion of many scoldings from old nurse, and many remonstrances from her mother — and perhaps nothing throughout her day was so great a trial of patience. To some it may seem a trifling thing to ask God's help in, but Cathy found it quite impossible to wade through a task of darning, or complete a long seam with an unruffled temper, unless she offered many little prayers for patience and perseverance and good-humour, and oftentimes the words of Christ rang sweetly in her ear, almost as if His voice of love encouraged her. "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." No great grand act of resignation in sitting down regularly and faithfully to *a* little task of sewing; but it was as much

as God asked of Catherine just then, and the constant effort and constant prayer were making her ready for harder sacrifices in future years.

Another disagreeable thing was to help Winnie with her music. Hard as it was to commence the habit of steady practising herself, that was a trifle compared to the burden of superintending her younger sister's musical performances, for Winnie had faint ideas of time and tune, all her talents lying in other directions, and, as Catherine said, "*could* anything be more detestable than to have one's teeth set on edge by false notes?" However, in answer to all the offers she had made of educating Winifred, this was the one only service Mrs. Hamilton would accept of. Miss Meredith came still, as she had come to Fairfield in Cathy's school-days, and she was all that could be desired until the little girl grew older; but as Winnie was undeniably stupid over her music lessons, her mother thought that a little help at

practising times might do good to all concerned.

When this plan was proposed, Catherine had acceded most readily, but the very first sound of poor Winnie's efforts sent her flying to Mrs. Hamilton, with a promise to "do anything in the world" except that one thing she had been asked.

But under Marion Lindsay's influence, and in accordance with the new "rule," Catherine made this daily effort and daily sacrifice; and if it was as much as she could do to be patient — sometimes a little more than she could manage—she was too honest to conceal from herself that it was a good thing to have this trifling mortification, which really was not at all beyond her strength.

All this practice of dry daily duty was very mysterious and unsatisfactory to Mary Leslie, who told every one she "could not imagine what had happened to Cathy Hamilton; she was not *half* so nice as she used to be."

"Do you know, Mary, I think that is scarcely fair," Rose Deane had answered one day. "I never was very intimate with Catherine before she went to school, for she had such a horrible temper; but I really like her now better than ever, for she is so different, so much more gentle in her way of treating every one, and nicer in a great many things."

"Well, yes," Mary replied. "Still I must say that this wonderful friendship with Marion Lindsay has made her very stupid. Instead of being always coming to walk with me, or wanting me there, she has fixed upon a certain round of things to do all day long; and, go when I may, I find her taken up with reading, or work, or something uninteresting."

"Well, she certainly is not so constantly with you, Mary. I suppose that is why you think her altered for the worse. Perhaps you are jealous of Miss Lindsay," added Rose, provokingly.

"*Me jealous!*" cried Mary, with a contemptuous toss of her head. "No, indeed. Catherine is quite welcome to choose her own friends, without it concerning me. All the same, I do wonder very much what she can admire in Marion Lindsay."

"Strong symptoms of jealousy, are they not, Nellie?" said Rose to another young girl who was by her side. "Mary, I advise you to examine your conscience, and see if you do not find some lurking suspicion of the green-eyed monster;" and she laughed merrily at Mary's discomfited face.

Though Rose Deane was so renowned a teaze that no one believed very much in the real meaning of her words, there was sufficient truth in them this time to cause Mary Leslie a great deal of annoyance. Had she been more humble, the "truth spoken in jest" would have gone far to show her the uncharitable feelings of her heart—the vexation with Catherine for not making her pre-*eminent,* the bitter dislike to Marion for, as

she imagined, taking her own place in the affections of her early friend; but Mary had been growing more proud and worldly since those childish days when she meant to try and imitate the holiness of God's saints, and she closed her eyes determinately against all faults which she termed "little ones."

So Rose Deane's bantering talk only made Mary's dislike to Miss Lindsay a little stronger than it had been before, and added a trifle more unkindness to the judgments she formed regarding her; and the next time she visited Fairfield her manner was so constrained, that Catherine noticed it, and, in her usual frank way, asked what was the matter.

"Oh, nothing at all is the matter—with me," said Mary, emphasising the two last words. "Mamma and I were saying yesterday what strangers you and Mrs. Hamilton were becoming, so I ran over to know how you are. But I daresay you are too busy to want me," and she glanced at Catherine's work-basket.

"Not at all," said Cathy. "But still, Mary, I *am* too busy not to make it an excuse for asking you to take off your hat and stay and help me. Look here, there are all these little frocks to get done for the school treat."

"Oh, I can't stay long enough to help you with your work, Catherine. I am going out with mamma almost directly. Why don't you ask your friend Marion Lindsay?"

"Marion has as many as these at home to do, besides a good deal of work for herself just now."

"Oh, I thought you would get her to assist you, you are such friends now; and yet I am sure, there *was* a time when you said you hated her."

Catherine flushed with shame at the remembrance of all that Mary's words brought up. There had been a time when she would have replied haughtily enough, but now she felt it was a humiliation which she deserved, and so she only said, "Yes, Mary; and I can *never be sorry* enough for all I thought and

said against Marion then. Though I hope God has forgiven me, I am afraid I shall always be punished by finding that the harm I did cannot quite be undone."

It was Mary's turn to colour, for she knew that Catherine meant to refer to her own dislike to Marion Lindsay, for which she considered herself guilty; and little as Mary was disposed to own that she was wrong, she could not be quite so mean as to see her friend take the blame of her want of charity.

"I don't think you need be unhappy about it, Catherine. No one ever liked the Lindsays, from their first coming, and you were at school then. You did not set people against them."

"But I helped, Mary. I said little sneering words, and spoke in a mysterious way about them, as if I knew more than I would tell, and I can see now the mischief and the wickedness of those half-assertions. I really believe that they do more harm than downright positive statements, and I would

give more than I can say if I could but take back all those words."

"Oh, what is the good of getting fidgetty and scrupulous, Cathy?" cried Mary, striving to stifle the whispers of her own conscience. "You did not mean to do the girl any harm, and if she is as holy as she sets up for, she must be very glad to be disliked. The saints were, you know." And Mary tried to laugh.

Catherine looked very sad — sad, for one thing, that her friend should speak so triflingly, still more sad because of the past sins to which her thoughts were turning; and at last she exclaimed, "Mary, I often think of those terrible words of our Lord. You know, He said that offences must needs come to all His servants, but do you remember what He said of those 'by whom the offence cometh?' It sometimes makes me tremble, and then I have to beg Him over and over again to pardon me." And Cathy's tears *dropped on* the work she held.

The conversation was getting upon subjects which were strangely unwelcome to Miss Leslie, and she hurried away; but she could not directly bid farewell to the thoughts which accompanied her, although in the course of a few hours she had laid them to rest, with the determination to accuse herself of all her sins against charity in her next confession, and that, she sought to persuade herself, would "do."

Chapter V.

IT was a quiet still evening in May when Marion Lindsay walked slowly towards Fairfield, with a heart full of pleasure, and yet pain. It was her last evening at home. After all the longing and waiting, to-morrow was to bring her heart's desire, and see her admitted into the convent she had chosen as that where her trial of religious life should be made.

If Marion looked sad, she was not unhappy. How could she be when God had accepted the offering she had made Him in so many whispered prayers? But yet partings are painful things, and although both mother and daughter loved the sacrifice, and loved it the more because it cut and hurt them, their natural

feelings lived still, and God, who saw the aching heart and tearful eyes, looked on them with infinite compassion, accepting the *will* to suffer for His sake.

So now Marion had come to take leave of Catherine Hamilton, and have a few last words together. She walked slowly, taking in the calm beauty of the spring evening, with the thought that never, if all went well, should she look again upon that fair scene. The cows were lowing from some distant pasture, the cuckoo made the air ring again, crowds of birds sang in the trees above her head, while the rustling of the long grass, and the merry tinkling music of the little brook, made up that soft confused murmur of sound one hears in the quiet stillness of the country.

Of course Catherine talked and laughed and cried in turns, as she sat with her friend in one of the cozy old-fashioned bow-windows of Fairfield. No one who knew her would *have* expected a calm and self-controlled good-

bye, but there were some words she could only whisper in Marion's ear at the last moment, when she clung to her with all the warmth of love and sorrow which was in her heart.

"Dear Marion, only tell me once more that you quite forgive me for being so unkind." And Marion had assured her again, as she had done many times before, that she never now remembered the past except with happiness, because it had made them friends at length.

"And you will pray for me? Ask our Lord to let me come where you are, and then I shall get very good, perhaps."

"No, I will not ask Him that, dear Cathy; it would be like telling Him that you and I knew what was best for you. I will pray that He may put you and keep you in the place where you will please and serve Him most perfectly. Will that do?"

"Yes, I suppose it must," said Catherine, half smiling, half crying. "You are so good,

Marion! I wonder if you ever had any faults like other people."

The deep flush which overspread her friend's pale face made Cathy sorry she had said this, even before Marion answered, "You only judge by the outside, dear. You little know, as God does, how deeply I have often grieved Him, how every day and every hour I have to repent of so much that is unfaithful. But I cannot stay longer. I wanted to ask you to do one thing for me, if you will."

"I would do a thousand," cried Cathy, drying her eyes. "What is it, Marion?"

"Only to go and see mamma sometimes, and cheer her up if she misses me a little too much at first—only once in a fortnight or so, dear, I mean, for mamma is very quiet, and that will be quite sufficient. And there is something else, but perhaps it may vex you."

"Oh, Marion! could it vex me to do anything in the world for you? Now, too—our last, last evening," cried Catherine, the tears starting afresh.

"Well, this is it, Cathy. I do think you have neglected Miss Leslie and some of your old friends a little of late, and perhaps by mixing with them you might lead them to think more of God."

For an instant Catherine's look and tone were those of a person deeply injured. "Now, Marion, I *do* think you are too bad! Have you not been teaching me to occupy myself usefully? And I have tried so much, and now you reproach me."

"Not reproach you, dear."

"Well, you want me to make some change, and I *can't* be good, and keep a rule, and try to please God all day, if I am everlastingly with girls who talk all the while of dress and parties, and everybody's new bonnets, and where they bought them, and how much they cost."

"Neither did I say *everlastingly*," put in Marion, as Catherine paused for breath. "Dear Cathy, you know I don't want to vex you—perhaps, indeed, I am all wrong, but I

did so want you to use the great influence you have among your friends for God. It might, indeed, be a temptation to you; you must pray about it, and then you will not make a mistake. Now, good-bye, Cathy; your love has been so pleasant, and you must let it come to me for the future through our Lord Himself. And pray for me, dear; pray that neither trials nor temptations may ever turn me back from following Him." And then Marion was gone, and Catherine went sorrowfully upstairs, as she always did in any trial, and at the foot of her crucifix prayed to Jesus, the "Man of Sorrows," that He would give her the grace to love every pain or suffering for His dear sake.

And Marion? Well, she, in her quiet room, was praying too, asking for more love, for greater courage; and if there was a thrill of pain at the thought that she was kneeling in her usual place for the last time, it was followed by a sense of rest and peace as she remembered the great deep love of God,

which would more than fill every void, so in that trust and security she slept quietly through that last night at home.

The result of Marion Lindsay's one request was, to take Miss Catherine Hamilton over to Mrs. Leslie's at the first convenient opportunity next day, for she began to realise that she had been lacking in discretion, and that to drop an old close intimacy as soon as she began in earnest to please God, was not the way to get others to serve Him too. Accordingly Cathy called on Mary, but she did not find that young lady in an amiable frame of mind.

"Your dear friend has really gone, then, or else we should scarcely be honoured by a visit," she began.

"Oh, Mary, don't talk like that of Marion. You would love her so if you knew her."

"I scarcely think so," said Mary, elevating her eyebrows. "However, I have not the least regret that I never made the experiment. But I may as well say, Catherine, as you are

here, that I think you have treated me very unkindly, turning me off for a stranger like her!"

"Indeed, Mary, I never wanted to do that," responded Catherine. "I did wish so very much to be good, and it seemed to help me when I was with Marion. I am very sorry if I have seemed unkind."

"*Seemed*, indeed! Why, every one has noticed it—every one has talked about it. But *I* don't mind; I am sure I don't wish to hinder you in your pursuit of perfection, so pray don't run the risk to which you are exposed in my company."

"Mary, I never heard you talk so. Did I ever say that you hindered me?"

"You implied that you could only 'be good,' as you call it, in Marion Lindsay's society. I really do not set up for one of the good sort, Catherine, neither do I feel any desire for it, although we have had this bright example in the midst of us."

Catherine started to her feet. Mary's at-

tempt at sarcasm, against Marion too, was more than she could bear. "Good-bye, Mary—it is useless to stay here when you are in such a disagreeable mood. I am only very sorry I came."

"So am I," retorted Mary. "It is evident that my society is not improving to your temper. Good-bye." And thus they parted, Catherine, to walk with great dignity until she was out of sight, when she quickened her step into almost a run; Mary, to pace the room and bite the tips of her fingers, and wish she knew how to bring back the old happy friendship, and yet show Cathy how deeply she had been injured.

It had been an effort to go to Mrs. Leslie's that morning; there were at least a dozen things Cathy would rather have done, and yet she had put them aside with that strong sense of duty which rarely failed her, and accepted it as a means of humbling herself. And then, like many older and wiser people, the humiliation had come in such a very

unlooked-for and unbearable manner, that Catherine felt perfectly indignant with her who had caused it, and passed a whole hour in declaring to herself that she neither could nor would submit to be treated so by Mary Leslie. "Just let her wait till I go and see her again," she thought. "*I* can do well enough without any companions at all, and there are plenty of girls who would be delighted—yes, really *delighted*—if I struck up a friendship with them. It was for her sake I went, not for my own, and *this* is what I get by it. Well, it is a lesson to me, that is all!" And Cathy sighed, and took off her hat and gloves, and put them in their places in a very vexed state of mind, and then sat down to decide what to be doing next. "I *ought* to go for a walk with Winnie, but I really cannot. Mary Leslie's conduct has quite put me out of my usual way, and I couldn't endure Winnie's chatter, my head aches already;" and she sat down by the open window, trying to believe she was not in the

least out of temper. A light step on the stairs and a rattling at the handle of the door brought a frown over Cathy's face, and without opening to the intruder she cried out, "Go away, Winnie, I am very much engaged."

"It is nearly twelve o'clock, Cathy, and there will only just be time to go into the town. I'm quite ready."

"I am not going, Winnie, you may take your things off. My head aches, and I am tired."

"Oh, Cathy! you promised, and you know how badly I want that hat for my doll. Well, perhaps mamma will go;" and accordingly Winnie flew off, and about ten minutes after Catherine saw Mrs. Hamilton and her little sister pass out of the gate and turn towards the town. She had been uneasy and dissatisfied with herself, more than half inclined to call back Winnie and fulfil her promise, but she had hesitated too long, and now her mother had been obliged to do her

duty. "Dear mamma, how unselfish she is," was Cathy's quick thought, "while I am as far as ever from pleasing God." And then, kneeling down on the floor, she hid her face in her hands, and owned to her Lord all the self-love and pride which had filled her heart that morning, and begged Him to pardon her, and help her to begin once more to deny herself, and never, never to grieve Him so again.

"Is your head better, dear?" asked Mrs. Hamilton that evening when they were alone together. "Winnie said it ached so badly this morning."

"Mamma," said Catherine, looking up in her face, "it was temper, not headache. Mary Leslie had vexed me, and I had given way to my pride, and the feeling of having broken down was so annoying, that I don't know whether I was most angry with her or myself. O dear! do you think I shall ever cure myself of all this horrid pride and temper?"

"Not *perfectly,* perhaps, in this world, Cathy, but yet by constant effort you may keep it always in check."

"It is such weary work, mamma."

"Yes, but He for whom you do it is worthy of all the difficulty, isn't He, dear?"

"Yes, yes," cried Catherine, stooping for a good-night kiss. "Well, I must try again to-morrow. How glad I am that S. Francis of Sales said that nice hopeful thing about beginning every day." And she ran off, with all her sadness gone, though the sorrow was there still—a sorrow which brought such acts of contrition before her little crucifix, that surely Jesus loved her more than ever, because she loved Him so truly.

Chapter VI.

THE day after their unfriendly parting, the first thoughts of Catherine and Mary were about all that had passed between them on the preceding afternoon, and Cathy, feeling she had been wrong, resolved to seek some early opportunity of acknowledging it. Fortunately she had not long to wait, for a few hours later they met accidentally in the lane which ran between their two homes. Perhaps the first impulse of both girls was to avoid speaking, but Catherine did not yield to it, and, holding out her hand, said, "Mary, I want to tell you how sorry I am for being so cross yesterday."

Mary blushed and stammered something unintelligible, and felt as if she had rather

have endured torture than stand there with Cathy's eyes looking earnestly in her face, as if she almost read some of the secret feelings of her heart, and grieved over them.

"May I walk home with you? Are you going any farther?" added Catherine. "There is something I want to say. Oh, Mary, I am afraid it is mostly my fault that this coldness has sprung up between us, but I don't want it to be so. Cannot we be friends, as we used?"

"Oh, I am not good enough to suit you," said Mary, trying to keep up her ill-humour.

"Now, you don't mean that," said Cathy, pretending not to notice the sneer. "Come, Mary, what is the matter?"

"Did I not tell you yesterday?"

"Well, Mary, but I say I am sorry, quite sorry for all I have done to vex you, and yet you will not forgive me."

Mary looked at the ground and murmured, "I am not unforgiving, Catherine. What is *the* use of all this fuss? I suppose our

friendship is worn out, and we cannot make it up again."

They were at the gate of Mrs. Leslie's house then, and as they passed in under the tall trees, which nearly met above their heads, Cathy turned with such a look of sadness that Mary half repented her words. "You had better come in, it is hot here," she said, and led the way to the old school-room where they had played together as little happy children, and which was now her own special sitting-room.

There Cathy sat down by the side of her old playmate, and said, "Mary, don't say that about our friendship being worn out. Is this to be the end of all the happy years we have known each other?"

Mary burst into tears—angry tears, but they partly relieved her heart from the load of ill-concealed jealousy which had been there so long. "I am sure it is not *my* fault," she sobbed. "*I* never gave you up, Catherine, until you were so unkind."

Poor Cathy! she was full of grief for having caused all this pain, and so she once more begged Mary's forgiveness. "And do let us begin all over again," she added. "Dear Mary, I am sure we ought to be so much more faithful to God, and perhaps we can help each other. Don't you remember our First Communion, and how we made plans for being so good, and thought it was not possible we could ever be the same naughty children we had been before? Yet these years have gone and we are no better—at least, I know *I* am not. How sad it is, and how much pain it must give to God."

The mention of the First Communion had stirred up memories which filled Mary Leslie's heart with shame and sorrow. *Remember!* Ah, yes, she remembered all that she had promised God, all that she had prayed for on that happy day, and on others when she had been very different to what she was now; and as the old memories crowded *up, her pride* gave way at last, and with a

burst of real honest tears she dropped her head on Catherine's shoulder, and clung to her as she had done in some of her childish troubles long before.

"O dear, Mary! have I been unkind again?" cried Cathy. "You frighten me when you sob and cry like this. Tell me what is the matter. Shall I call Mrs. Leslie —shall I go away?"

"No, no," sobbed Mary, holding her still more tightly. "I will tell you—tell you all, Cathy. I can't be hard and proud any longer. Oh, I have been so miserable!"

"Because I kept away? I am so sorry," exclaimed Catherine, but Mary interrupted her.

"It is not that, dear dear Cathy. You said we were no better, but *you* are better. Every one can see how much more kind and patient you are. It is I who have been getting worse; you don't know how every year I have seemed to love God less, and find it a weariness and trouble to serve Him. And then,

lately, I have been downright wicked. It began from that time when you owned all the uncharitable things you had said, and I, who had been worse, hid my part in the matter. Cathy, I have never known a happy day since, for it seemed as if I had lost all check upon the evil in my heart, and the envy and jealousy grew worse and worse. And then, just think, I have been to the Sacraments because it would be noticed if I stayed away. I have been without love and without sorrow, Catherine, and I have tried to smooth things down, and tell them in confession so that they might not sound as bad as they really were. All this I have done; and when my conscience has reproached me I have determined not to listen. And now what *can* I do to make it all right again?"

Cathy sent one little prayer up to God; then kneeling on the floor by Mary, she put her arm round her and said: "Dear Mary, you have already begun once more. God has

forced you to see all this, and that is a fresh beginning. Now you have only to do what remains, and you know what that is."

"Yes," said Mary. "I know the only thing is to confess all these wretchedly mean, deceitful things: nothing will be right till I do, and yet I don't feel humble enough to do it. *You* would, but then I am not frank and honest, like you. I always think most of standing well with people, and hiding my faults under a good appearance. I never really saw before what a weak, low nature mine is."

"I am quite sure our Lord loves to see you so humble and sorry now, dear; and He will make you happy after you have told Him all, and got it forgiven." And after a few more hesitations and fears, Mary said that she would humble herself for the past, and make a new beginning.

She did so, and it was a turning point in her life, for God's grace, which had roused her from the dangerous path she was pur-

suing, helped her to go steadily forward in the Divine service, and gradually to overcome her many faults.

After Marion Lindsay's departure, Cathy Hamilton's life went by in a very quiet routine; yet she was not unhappy, because she found so much to do, and such content in the doing of it!

The old women in the villages round, who had never forgotten Dr. Hamilton, loved nothing so much as to see his daughter's bright young face appear in the doorway when she brought them the relief they needed, or the warm clothing made by her own hands, or only her smile and cheerful words. Anyway, she was welcomed by the good old bodies, who had so many questions to ask about "madam," and "little miss," and the "young masters."

Then, too, the tiny school-children all loved "Miss Catherine," and gave delighted grins if she peeped in to hear their singing; or, if they met her in the village, would run

yards just for the pleasure of dropping a curtsey or making a bow, which was sure to gain them some notice. Altogether, with duties at home and duties outside, Cathy never needed to complain of "nothing to do;" and thus her heart was lighter and her temper far sweeter than ever it had been when she put her own pleasure in the foreground.

"Mamma, I begin to think that God must surely mean me to be active and useful in the world," she would sometimes say. "After I left off caring for parties, and visiting, I used to fancy I should be a nun, but now I really am sure it was true that I had no vocation. I am much more fit to visit the poor people, and teach the children, and do that sort of work for God. Don't you think so?"

"I do not feel sure about anything, dear Cathy, yet. You are so very young—scarcely seventeen, and in general I don't think God marks the future out plainly at that age. Do be content to use the present, and leave the time to come in His hands."

Catherine would sigh then. It certainly was hard for mamma always to be saying something about her youth. After all, seventeen was not so very, very young, and yet people would persist in talking as if she might be a big overgrown child — nothing more! There were moments when Cathy would have sacrificed all she possessed if she could but have taken a leap over the next six or seven years, to find herself a woman, with her vocation decided; however, the end of both talking and thinking was always a prayer to be made patient in waiting and faithful in every little present duty, and with that prayer and her own steady purpose, no harm could result from her little day-dreams.

Had she but seen into that future which seemed so bright in the glow of uncertainty, she would have shrunk back trembling and crying, "I cannot, cannot bear it;" but God, in His infinite tenderness, was hiding it from her until she was ready for the cross He had chosen as the means of perfecting her soul

and rooting out the faults of her natural character.

During the bright days of summer Frank came home for his vacation, and perhaps nothing made Mrs. Hamilton more thankful for the blessings and graces God had poured out upon her children, than when she saw them so happy and united together; Frank and Catherine loving to pour out all their desires and hopes for their future lives to each other's ears—she, listening delighted as he spoke of the happy time when he should be among the number of God's priests, working among His poor, toiling for souls in some crowded city or humble village; while he sympathised in all Cathy's glowing schemes for helping the people round her home, and spending her life and means and strength for God's glory.

"Do you know, mamma," said Catherine, one day, "the only thing that troubles me now is that I seem *too* happy. I *like* it, of course, but sometimes it almost frightens

me, as if it was dangerous, and could not last."

Mrs. Hamilton looked up at the bright sunny face opposite her. Truly it spoke of a life in which there was no suffering, for the one early sorrow of her father's death had not left behind an outward trace, though it had done so great a work for good in her character, and she wondered, as she glanced, in what way the cross would fall on Catherine.

That it must come, Mrs. Hamilton felt sure, but she tried to leave all her children in God's hands without fear, and so she only answered, "It will *not* last, dear Cathy: life cannot always be smooth and unruffled as it is to you just now. This time is what God allows until you are stronger to endure suffering of some kind, so you need not be afraid of it, because it is as much part of His plan for you as the harder future which may come. Have you begun to *want* to be tried?" she added, with a smile. "You used to fear it so."

"And I do still, mamma, only something seems to make me feel quite sure God will give me hard things to bear for Him. I do not know why, but I have never for one day forgotten those words in the "Imitation"—"To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee, if thou art resolved to love Jesus and constantly to follow Him;" and, in spite of trying to put them out of my mind, they stay there always, even in my very happiest times. And then I begin to wonder what is to come to me, for I can't suppose the little trifling vexations which happen now will be enough to make me good." And Catherine looked dreamily out into the old garden, as if the trees and birds and flowers could give her some light upon the future.

"I can only say what I have to preach to myself very often, dear," replied Mrs. Hamilton. "Go on simply and faithfully day by day, and do not try to find out what God keeps hidden from us."

"Well, I will try not." And Catherine

turned her eyes from the garden to her work. "Certainly, the task of the present moment is to make this tiresome little frock body come into the right shape. Do look at it, mamma, and tell me what is amiss." And soon after all the shadow had passed from Cathy's face, and she was talking as fast and merrily as possible about some of her little protégées at the school.

Chapter VII.

"CATHY, I hope you have nothing particular to do next Tuesday," said Mary Leslie, bursting suddenly into the room where her friend was reading one hot August morning. "We are going to get up a picnic, and I came first of all to ask you."

"Oh, I can come, I am sure: but where are you going, Mary?"

"Well, there is a division of opinion at home. *I* want to go to Ashleigh Wood, but mamma thinks the Castle, because the drive there is longer and pleasanter, and it is so much better if the weather chanced to be rainy. If you remember, at the Franklin's picnic the grass in the wood was so damp, that we could not dine there at all."

"I *do* remember," said Catherine. "It was so stupid having to sit in the carriages, and have platesful of eatables brought round. I hope you will go to the Castle, certainly."

"We want Mrs. Hamilton and Frank, besides Cyril and Winnie."

"Frank goes away to-morrow, so *he* can't come," answered Catherine; "but I will go and ask about the others now." So she ran upstairs in search of her mother, and returned with the promise of herself and Winnie and Cyril; but Mrs. Hamilton would not positively engage to be one of the party.

"Oh, she *must* come!" exclaimed Mary. "Try and persuade her when the day is really here, won't you, Cathy? Well, I must be off, for I want to ask the Deanes and the Franklins, and a whole host of people."

"The Lindsays?" inquired Cathy.

Mary shrugged her shoulders expressively. "Why, no; I think not. Don't imagine I am going to speak ill of them, Catherine, *though*. I only meant to say that, as you

know, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay never go out, even in the quietest way, and I am sure you won't expect me to ask that little chit of a Clara."

"It would give her an immense deal of pleasure if you did, and hers is a dull sort of life."

"But, Cathy, I am not going to ask a parcel of children. Only Winnie and little Amy Deane, because the rest of you and the Deanes are coming."

"Do ask Clara Lindsay, then: it will only add one more to the smaller ones, and I shall be much happier to have her there."

"Well, anything for peace," laughed Mary. "You do love to get your own way still, Cathy; but I can assure you, that if you think of spending your day in amusing those children, you are entirely mistaken. Now, don't forget Tuesday; and you really might say a few prayers for a fine day, Catherine." And Mary got as far as the hall-door, and partly down the steps, but then returned with

a rush to ask Catherine "what she was going to wear."

"The very oldest, shabbiest things I can turn out, Mary. I mean to have regular good fun scrambling about the ruins, and I shall take care to avoid everything which can spoil by accidents or showers. Perhaps you will be afraid to have me so?" and she laughed.

"No; *I* don't mind how you dress, only I don't want anybody to look a fright. It really would offend my eyes, and spoil my pleasure, Cathy."

"Then I will try to avoid so much disfigurement as that; but you need not expect I shall get up an elaborate costume for the occasion. I shall leave that for the Miss ——" But here Catherine stopped short.

"*Do* tell me who you were going to say," cried Mary. "I can guess, though; you meant the ——."

Cathy interrupted her quickly. "Mary, I shall not tell you who I meant; no, not *even if you* guess right! It would be wrong,

and I am only sorry I began to say what I did, for I have no right to remark upon what other people choose to wear or do."

"Really, Catherine, you carry your ideas too far. What could be the harm of saying a little thing like that? *to me*, too. I am sure there can be no want of charity in that."

"I am afraid there would, Mary. At any rate, we will not risk it, and you know what reason I have to mistrust myself when I begin to criticise;" and Cathy's face looked a shade graver.

"I know you are right," answered Mary; "and yet I can't believe one could do much harm by a few little words like that between ourselves. However, now I am really and truly going;" and accordingly she disappeared, to give invitations to the rest of her acquaintances, not omitting little Clara Lindsay, who was delighted at the prospect of such a treat.

That afternoon Catherine walked over to see Mrs. Lindsay, and sat working with her under the shade of a drooping ash-tree until

the cool of the evening, talking of Marion and other subjects.

"And she is really quite happy and quite well?" asked Catherine. "I am so glad."

"Yes; every letter I get seems more full of contentment and happiness than the last. I am quite sure she has found the place God willed her to be in."

"That *must* be happiness," cried Catherine. "I should think one could bear anything and do anything, if one had the *perfect* certainty it was the very life God chose. But, dear Mrs. Lindsay, don't you think it is possible to make a mistake?"

"I can hardly believe it, if we pray long and constantly for God's guidance. Surely He would not lead any one wrong who trusted Him completely."

"But yet, don't you think a person might pray a great deal, and fancy something was God's Will, and do it, but afterwards find out it was a mistake? It really does seem to me *so very possible*, because you see, Mrs. Lind-

say, God does not let us hear Him speak directly to us."

"Not often. He chooses others usually as the means of declaring His Will. But, Catherine, though I can imagine such a case as you propose, where it seems as if a mistake had been made, I should be inclined to say that the apparent mistake had been all part of God's plan to do some special work of its own."

"I see what you mean," said Cathy, meditatively. "I believe you are right, too; for it isn't like God not to take care of all who trust Him. Well, I am very glad all is right for Marion; but don't you miss her very much?" and she put her hand into Mrs. Lindsay's.

Just a little moistening of the calm grey eyes might have been seen had any one looked closely, but there was not even a quiver in the voice which answered, "I could not have given God what cost me nothing. I am glad to miss her, because I feel it is a little suffer-

ing to offer Him. Dear child, I have never spoken of myself to one so young as you before; but I will tell you this. Years ago I was a little girl like you. No! you can scarcely imagine it," she added, answering Cathy's look of surprise. "As eager to do great things for God—as anxious to know what He asked of me. And I began to plan for myself, and I chose the life of a religious, and dreamed over it by night and day, until at last I made a trial—by my own will, without waiting for His—and I failed, Catherine. And then I began to understand that God is slow in His work, and I had been all haste and impulse; and though the humiliation and disappointment cost me much, I hope they made me less self-confident, more dependent on God. I was thinking of this when I answered your question about mistakes, dear, and I believe even my haste and eagerness were permitted to teach me what I could have learned in no other way. So in time I found that God called me to a far

different life from that I had dreamed of—to have the cares and responsibilities of home and husband and little children; and now perhaps you can understand why I love to give my Marion to His special service. Though I was unworthy of that higher path, He has been so good to let me offer Him my child."

Catherine gave a little squeeze to the hand she held, and there was a long silence, which was broken by Clara running up to talk about the picnic to which she had been invited, and thus changed the subject. "It was so kind of Miss Leslie to ask her," said Mrs. Lindsay. "So thoughtful for a stranger, who could not have been supposed to think what a pleasure it would be to the child."

Catherine did not say a word as to her own part in the matter, but expressed her delight that Clara was going, and began to arrange for her to start with the Fairfield party. But deep down in her heart there was a secret source of joy that in this tiny thing

God had let her bring pleasure to one little heart, and as she ran along the lanes which took her home, her happiness rippled out in snatches of songs, interrupted by dashes into the hedges for the wild flowers her mother was so fond of.

A quick step gaining upon her made her turn hurriedly, to see Father Austen. "Oh, Father, how you startled me!" she exclaimed. "Look at my flowers!"

"Yes, they are very sweet. And what was all the singing about? Because of this picnic which I am hearing of everywhere?"

"No, indeed. I like it very much, but I was not singing for that; I had nearly forgotten it. I believe I was singing because I could not help it. Everything is so happy, and so bright and beautiful. Oh, Father, *must* it all go, and hard, dark things come?"

The priest glanced at her earnest face. He often thought of her in after days as she had looked that bright August evening in the *bloom* of her youth and strength. "Life is

neither all sorrow nor all joy, in usual cases," he answered. "Years bring trials, even in the happiest lives, Catherine, and the cross must come to every one in some way. But we have God always, and He gives such sweetness to those who suffer, that it more than makes up for the brightness of early joy. I daresay you can hardly understand this yet—hardly guess at that peace which comes from doing the Divine Will. It is, indeed, a peace which passeth all understanding." And Father Austen in his turn seemed to fall into a fit of musing, until they reached the gates of Fairfield.

"Do come in, Father; mamma will be so pleased."

"No; I am busy to-night. There are several persons I have to see yet. Good-bye, Catherine. I hope you will enjoy your day on Tuesday."

"Thank you, Father; I am sure I shall. I nearly always do enjoy things, except disagreeable ones."

"And they are not *quite* so unbearable as they used to be, I think," said the priest.

Catherine looked up brightly. "No, not quite. Oh, Father, it is so kind of God. I really do believe He is letting me just in a little way find out that it is happier to do His Will than to please myself." And then, with another "good-night," she ran into the house, to tell her mamma what a pleasant afternoon she had spent.

For the next few days all the young folks in that part were talking of the expected pleasure of the picnic Mrs. Leslie was giving, and when the sun rose gloriously on the Tuesday morning, it seemed as if their happiness was complete. As Mary and Catherine came out from the little church, after the early Mass, they stopped to exchange just a few words about their delight at the prospect of such weather, and then hurried home to get breakfast over, for the party were to start early; and carriages, phaetons, waggonettes, "*clothes*'-baskets," horses, and ponies, were

to turn out to convey them all to the ruins of the old Castle, about a dozen miles away.

No one there looked better than Cathy Hamilton, though she kept to her word, and only wore a plain Holland dress and broad-brimmed straw hat. No one looked happier or sweeter-tempered, and her mother, who went to Mrs. Leslie's to see them start, gazed after her child with a proud, fond pleasure, as she waved "good-bye" from the waggonette in which she sat, with Clara Lindsay and Winnie close to her, and then went home to Fairfield to spend a quiet day, in which a great many thoughts were given to Catherine. Indeed, afterwards, Mrs. Hamilton used to wonder why it was that on that particular day her mind seemed to rest on the one subject. If she mused on the past, when her children were all little babies around her, some wilful freak or loving word of Cathy's seemed uppermost in her memory. If she thought of the events of later years, it was just the same. And so all day long it was Catherine,

always Catherine, who seemed to occupy her; but so happily, because the recollection of past waywardness even appeared but to show how wonderfully she had been changed by God's grace.

Meanwhile, all went cheerily with the picnic party. Although most of them had been to the old ruins many times before, their charm was none the less; and besides, there was the fun of clambering in and out amidst the mouldering walls, and sitting upon the highest points which would bear them, while they talked and chatted with each other. And then came dinner, which was always a great success under Mrs. Leslie's management, for they never found that the knives and forks had been left behind, and no one turned the salt into the fruit tarts, or upset the lobster salad, and other such accidents, which not unfrequently happen on these occasions.

Mr. and Mrs. Leslie always said that Cathy Hamilton was the most useful girl of all who

were there. She helped to unpack the hampers, and seemed to know intuitively where everything was to be found, and then, when all was ready, it was she who rang the dinner-bell, and hunted up all the stray couples who did not arrive at the right moment. But better than all it was to see how thoroughly unselfish Catherine was, how her whole mind seemed given to make others happy; and whereas in former times she had always loved to be pre-eminent, that day she utterly forgot self in her care for those who were less known, or noticed, or loved than she was, especially the little ones of the party.

But the day wore on, and the sun began to lose its power, and hid behind a belt of trees towards the west, and then the young folks set to dancing on a level piece of grass which seemed formed on purpose, and in their amusement no one noticed when Catherine Hamilton slipped away from the rest. Once somebody missed her, and asked where she was, and little Clara Lindsay answered that

she had seen Cathy clambering up to a nook amidst the ruins, and that she had a book in her hand, as if she was going to sit and read; and when Clara said this no one wondered any more, but concluded that Cathy was tired, and would come back to them after a rest.

They soon forgot about her, and the dancing went on merrily until the sun was quite gone, and just one star came trembling out in the quiet sky; and then Mr. Leslie turned deaf to all appeals, and insisted upon preparing to start for home. There was some grumbling at breaking up the happy party, as they looked up shawls and hats and wrappings, which had been left in every imaginable nook and corner, while the gentlemen went about arranging how every one was to be packed into the conveyances; and then only was it found that Catherine was not with the rest, neither could any one tell exactly where she had gone to. They rang the bell, they *made* the air resound with her name, but

still she did not appear; and the echo, which had given them so much fun a few hours before, now had a mournful sound as it sent back the cry of "Catherine! Catherine!"

"She is poking about among the ruins," exclaimed several of the party. "Little Clara saw her going there with a book, an hour or two back." So a good number went in search of her, while the rest stood waiting to be off, remarking that Cathy always did get dreaming when once she was left to herself.

Chapter VIII.

AFTER getting away from the merry dancers without being observed (as she thought), Catherine had wandered back to the ruins, which were about ten minutes walk from the level grass they had chosen for their ball-room, and clambering in and out amongst the rough loose stones, had succeeded in making for herself a comfortable seat. Then (as little Clara Lindsay had noticed) she drew a book from her pocket, intending to read. But she did not open it. At first she sat and watched the gay party, which she could see quite plainly from her elevated perch, and then she began dreaming of many things; wondering what the future had in store for all of them and for herself, wondering

whether in a few years' time they would be scattered in different parts, and look back to that happy August day from the midst of cares, and sorrows, and disappointments. Strange thoughts, perhaps, at the close of a picnic party; but then Catherine *was* strange —every one said so!

As she pondered over these things, she gazed on the landscape before her. How peaceful and lovely it was! The fields dotted with sheep, the villages lying below; on either side of her the sloping hills looking gradually more grey and indistinct, for the sun was near its setting, and the light of the sky grew paler and softer as it slowly deepened into night; and Catherine could not but wonder a little about this great nature—this world which is so very fair — and it seemed so strange to realise that it too was to perish, that sooner or later all things around would be no more as then they were. And thus her thoughts travelled on to the mystery of eter*nity, the* soul's eternity of bliss or woe, and

there she stopped in her musing, and, fixing her heart upon the heavenly kingdom, prayed for light, and faith, and strength to endure until she reached its perfect safety and rest.

At last Catherine became conscious that the gay music had ceased, and night was fast coming on, and she must leave her nook amidst the ruins and join the rest, before they missed her; so she rose hastily and began to descend.

She wondered why it was that the way, which had seemed easy enough to ascend, should be difficult now; why the loose stones rolled from beneath her feet, and went crashing down to the remains of the old moat which surrounded the castle. The dusky light, too, made it awkward, and she stumbled once or twice, or caught at some branch or bramble to steady herself. She had just reached a turn of the ruins which hid her from the distant party, and was thinking that in a few minutes more the way would be easier, when she missed her footing, and with a heavy

crash went down from the crumbling ledge along which she was trying to walk, down the steep slope, amid a shower of falling stones, and lay there faint and helpless.

Once or twice she tried to call, but the echo answered her as if in mockery. After a few moments she heard her own name shouted in every imaginable tone and key, but her lips seemed growing rigid, and would not form a sound; and when, after some delay, Mr. Leslie found her, she had fainted, and was utterly unconscious.

It was not long before the whole party were on the spot, and water was brought to bathe her face and hands, while Cyril and Winnie knelt by her side, imploring her to speak, to open her eyes, if only for a minute.

After a while she rallied from her faintness, but she could not move; and it was plain that some serious injury had been caused by her fall, for at every attempt to raise her she fainted again.

The party broke up at once and drove sadly

homewards, while Mr. and Mrs. Leslie remained until a surgeon had been brought to superintend Catherine's removal; and at last, by the light of the rising moon, a sorrowful little company took her back to Fairfield.

It seemed to Mrs. Hamilton as if the time of her husband's death was all brought back again, when Mary Leslie, with Cyril, came into the drawing-room at Fairfield, with pale troubled faces, to tell her what had happened, and to say that Catherine—with Winnie holding fast by her hand—was being brought slowly home.

"You are not thinking it best to deceive me, Mary?" asked the poor mother. "She is not dead, as *he* was, when they told me?"

"No, no, dear Mrs. Leslie, indeed, Catherine is living. She had fainted from the fall and the shock, but she opened her eyes before we left, and stretched out her hand to Winnie, and mamma thinks that perhaps, when she is a little revived, we shall find she is not so seriously hurt."

But for several days there was fear and sorrow hanging like a dark cloud over Fairfield. Only Catherine herself seemed calm and unfrightened, and, in answer to all their questions, said she should "soon be better."

Doctors came and went, visitors besieged the door-bell, the poor from the neighbouring cottages hung about the house for hours, waiting to get news of "Miss Catherine;" and nothing was known beyond the fact that there was no longer any danger, though the doctors feared the spine had been much injured. It was not for more than three weeks that the terrible truth was known in and around Fairfield, and little Clara Lindsay happened to be the first to carry the news. She had been to the house to inquire, as usual, and on her return home had rushed to her bedroom, crying violently, and there Mrs. Lindsay joined her, and learned with some difficulty, through her choking sobs, that "poor dear Cathy would never walk again." *Winnie* said the doctors were all quite sure.

"She must lie on a couch always, until she died;" and Clara began to cry again more than ever.

It was indeed so. The bright young life had not been struck down by death, but the dark cloud of long and painful suffering had gathered round Catherine—a death in life—which was almost more terrible to bear, until she should learn that the suffering which would partly detach her from earth, the privation which would shut her out from its joys, even the yearnings and aspirations which must now remain unsatisfied and unfulfilled, were all part of the way by which God was leading her to Himself.

"How shall I, how can I tell her!" said Mrs. Hamilton to poor old nurse, who paced the corridor outside Catherine's door, wringing her hands, and crying over her "poor pretty darling." That was the worst part to the mother's heart, the knowledge of the shock such news would be to her child. The next day was her birthday too, her long-

desired seventeenth birthday; the usual quantity of gifts had been prepared, and Cathy, who had seemed better and stronger, had been talking brightly of how royally she would keep the day, even though she was fastened there on her bed!

"But I shall soon be running about as well as any one, mamma, and then we will have a party, to celebrate it properly. I am so glad to be seventeen."

That had been said about an hour before the physician had spoken the sentence of life-long helplessness; and Mrs. Hamilton had crept out of Catherine's sight with a stunned, sickening sense of misery, and began almost unconsciously putting away all the birthday presents in an unused cupboard.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Winnie, catching her thus. "Do you forget that to-morrow is the day, and you are hiding away dear Cathy's pretty things."

"I can get them out when they are wanted. *I scarcely* think we shall keep the day to-

morrow, my darling;" and then Mrs. Hamilton had told Winnie, and the little girl crept silently down the stairs and out in the garden, until Clara Lindsay came, to whom she poured out her sorrowful tidings.

"How *can* I tell her!"—that was the constant thought of Catherine's mother during the long, long day, and as evening drew on the truth still remained untold, and every hour had only served to make the effort harder. But when the twilight came, and the room was very still, and Cathy lay calm and quiet, clasping her mother's hand, Mrs. Hamilton, in gentle words and faltering voice, tried to make her understand that God had at last made known His purpose in her regard, He had marked out her future life — one so different to any she had pictured, one which was right in the shadow of the Cross, which no human love could change or lighten—the path of silent, helpless suffering!

For a few moments it seemed that Catherine could not grasp the truth. "Never any better,"

she repeated. "But I *am* better; to-day has been the easiest since my accident." Then, when at last she took in the whole meaning of her mother's words, she gave one low bitter cry, and turning away her face, lay as if stunned and speechless from the intensity of her grief.

"It cannot be true, it cannot be," were the first words she murmured. "God would never do it when I want to work for Him, when I have promised Him my life and health, and all I have, for His service. Mamma, the doctors must be wrong. God would never doom me to a life of uselessness and helplessness."

"Dear Catherine, I dare not tell you that there is hope. We have had the best advice, and all agree in this opinion. O my darling! God knows how gladly, how thankfully, I would have borne this for you, were it possible; but I will bear it *with* you as best I can, and our Lord Himself will hold you up *with* His tenderest love."

"*Love,*" repeated Catherine. "Can this be love? Mamma, you must pray for me, for all is dark and hard, and it seems as if I could not see the love of God now as once I did. I never, never dreamed of suffering like this; death would have been easier, so much easier. I think I could have borne to be poor or friendless, to give up all I loved for God, but not such a cross as this. It is too hard for me, and I am still so young! Only seventeen to-morrow;" and at the thought of this coming birthday, so wished for, so talked of, and now bringing its sudden crushing weight of sorrow, Catherine burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking.

It was not long before Father Austen came in. He had heard in the morning from Mrs. Hamilton what the physicians had decided, and the first leisure moment had brought him to Catherine's side, to speak comfort to her in the Name of God.

"You do not understand, Father, you can't feel what it is to me," she said, turning

wearily away as he sought to lead her to rest her mind upon the certainty of God's love, even now in this dark day of sorrow. "Anything but this I would have borne; this is too much for me. Oh, please pray that I may die, I would so much rather die," she added, with a fresh burst of tears.

"My child, my dear Catherine," said the good priest, who was feeling intensely the cloud which had fallen upon the young life he had watched over from its earliest infancy. "If I cannot understand, there is One Who can, Who knows how keenly you suffer, Who has seen into your heart, and read in it every plan and hope for serving Him. But He has put His hand upon them all, and upon you, Catherine, and He asks you just to lie there, without reasoning or murmuring, and only trust Him. Can you do it?"

"I wish I could. Oh, indeed, I do not want to murmur, and think hardly of God, and yet ——"

"'And yet He *loves* me.' Try and say that

whenever you are tempted to complain. Now I will leave you, and I, who can comfort you so little, will pray God, Who can comfort you so much, to bless and help you."

Catherine was almost worn out with excitement and grief, and those who watched by her during the night were glad to find that she slept many hours, but her rest was unusually disturbed and broken by moans and sighs, though once or twice, as she half woke, they heard her mutter, "And yet He loves me." Evidently poor Cathy was trying to lay hold of the fact of God's compassion as her only help in that, the darkest, hardest moment of her life.

Chapter IX.

THE prettiest room imaginable was fitted up for Catherine as soon as she could leave her bed, and there she was wheeled upon the invalid couch which had been obtained for her, one September afternoon, just a month after her accident. All the morning Mrs. Hamilton had been going in and out, suggesting and arranging and altering the things which had been put there to please Cathy's taste or increase her comfort. Winnie scampered up and downstairs, fetching and carrying all she could think of, and when Cyril came in from school they went together to the garden to cut flowers for the centre of the table, and then it was complete. "Isn't it sweetly pretty?" cried

Winnie, delightedly. "Oh, I hope Catherine will be pleased."

"She is sure to be pleased," said Cyril. "It's enough to make one wish to be ill oneself, isn't it, mamma?"

Mrs. Hamilton smiled rather sorrowfully. "Not quite that, Cyril; still I think no room could look more comfortable. Now, Winnie, I shall trust to you to order a nice little bright fire to be lighted, and the small pink tea-service to be on the table by five o'clock, so that all may be ready when Cathy is wheeled out, and we will have an early tea with her up here to celebrate the day."

Winnie was delighted, and the whole of her afternoon was passed in looking at the small time-piece, and wishing for five o'clock to come. However, a little variation in her employment was caused by Clara Lindsay coming to Fairfield with a beautifully arranged basket of fruit for Catherine, and Winnie took her upstairs to see the pretty *room.* There were choice prints on the walls

— Catherine's favourites; her books were arranged in a small case on one side of the window; a piano was there, too, so that her friends could give her music if she cared for it; her pet canary hung in the window, the small terrier and the spoiled old Persian cat had already established themselves on the rug, and gave a home-like look to the room; and as for the flowers, they were everywhere.

Clara pronounced it perfect, and then went home to make pleasant pictures in her mind of her "dear Catherine" lying there, so happy and pleased because of all that had been done to get ready for her.

Alas for everybody! When Cathy was settled in her place, near the window, from which she could see the church, the village, and the pretty fields beyond, she just covered her face with her hands, and burst into a fit of hysterical crying, which frightened Winnie quite out of the room, and distressed Mrs. Hamilton exceedingly; and it was fully half-

an-hour before she was calm enough to say what was the matter.

"Oh, mamma, it breaks my heart," she sobbed. "Just fancy what it is to know I must lie here always, to see the church, and remember the morning of the picnic, when I was there, little thinking it was the last time; and to look at the fields, where I can never walk any more. Oh, I shall hate this room —I cannot stay here, indeed I cannot."

It was well that Winnie was gone, for she could not have understood, as Mrs. Hamilton did, all the painful memories which were freshly awakened by the sight of familiar objects—could not, in spite of her love, have felt such pity for Catherine in her sorrow and weakness.

"Try it for to-day and to-morrow, dear Cathy, and then you shall move to the other side of the house if you like; but possibly you will not mind staying here when you are used to it. Now we must have some tea, which *Winnie* has been getting ready. Poor Winnie,

I hope she will not be very unhappy to see you in such grief."

"I cannot help it, mamma; it is quite enough to break my heart, I am sure," said Catherine, murmuringly, and nothing that was done seemed to raise her spirits. Winnie pointed out the beauty of the pictures on the wall, but the only answer was a fresh fit of crying. Mrs. Hamilton brought in Clara Lindsay's pretty basket of fruit, but Catherine only turned away and said she did not want it; and at last she insisted on being taken back to her bedroom, declaring that she would rather stay there always now she was of no more use to any one.

"Mamma, I shall never feel any pleasure in getting things ready for Cathy again," said poor disappointed Winnie, when she was going to bed. "I had tried to think of everything she could possibly like, and yet you see she was not pleased—no, not with even one single little thing. Wasn't it rather unkind?"

"Not unkind, dear Winnie, because Cathy has been very ill, and it has made her so weak that she can scarcely bear any change. Besides, she has to suffer a good deal of pain, and then it was quite natural that the first leaving her room should bring freshly before her the quiet saddened life which is all that she can ever expect in this world."

"Well, mamma, but it wasn't *super*natural, certainly; and Cathy was so good and kind for a long time before her accident, that I thought she would be quite like one of the saints now, and I had fancied her lying on the sofa, looking so holy and resigned—and all that," added Winnie, breaking down in the description of her anticipations.

Mrs. Hamilton almost laughed, but she said, "Then you were expecting a great deal more than God expects, my little girl. *He* knows that to be good and holy, when all things are like sunshine, is not difficult; but to be patient and sweet and even happy in *the midst* of pain and disappointment, and

a great life-long sorrow, is so hard, that it takes time before even the holiest person can attain to such a state. You must not be surprised if dear Cathy is hard to please, and even what *you* would call 'cross' at first. Our Lord is the only one Who fully understands the heaviness of the cross she has to bear."

"Then I have been unkind to judge her," said Winnie, sadly.

"Thoughtless, more than unkind," said Mrs. Hamilton; "but our good kind God is pitying you, because He knows how greatly you were disappointed. See how He bears with us all, and forgives us so much because He knows our weakness."

Winnie went away very thoughtfully. Certainly, if God was so patient, *she* ought to be; and she would try, yes, even if Cathy was ever so disagreeable.

It was her last resolution that night, and she needed to recall it in many a trying day and week which followed, for her sister's

irritability was very hard to bear. She had not moved out of the pretty sitting-room after all, for she declared it would be just the same in any other: everything must be miserable, and there was no help for it. As she lay and looked at the print on the wall before her of the Agony in the Garden, which Mrs. Hamilton had hung there, partly for a sweet, silent example, partly for her consolation, she would cry bitterly, murmuring, "*I* cannot say, 'Not my will,' as *He* did. If He had tried me in any other way, perhaps I could, but this is more than I can endure."

If they brought books, they made her head ache; if they offered to read to her, she "hated to be read to;" if Winnie talked about the village children, who always wanted to know how "Miss Catherine" was, she was only bidden never to mention things which made it harder to lie there helplessly.

No one felt for Cathy more than her friend Mary Leslie, and many hours did she take from the pleasures she loved, to sit by the

suffering girl, trying to cheer and amuse her, bearing contradiction and sharpness with a gentleness which was quite new to her. But even Mary got summarily dismissed occasionally, and the little scraps of innocent news she heard and treasured up for Catherine's ears generally failed to create even a passing interest.

"Catherine, have you heard about Laura and Jessie Frazer," she said, one day. "Laura is going to be married in the spring to Mr. Collingwood."

"Really, Mary," said Catherine, fretfully, "you need not tell me that. Did I ever care to hear about weddings and those sort of things?"

"No, I remember you never did, Cathy," said Mary, good-humouredly. "It was I who loved news of all kinds. But I am sure you *will* care to hear that Jessie is going into religion. She is to leave for the Dominican convent at Stone in about a month's time."

"That is worse than the other," said

Catherine, her tears beginning to flow fast. "It makes me feel how other girls may all have their hearts' desire, may give themselves entirely to God, while I can do nothing for Him or for any one;" and she cried so violently, that Mary ran in terror to call Mrs. Hamilton.

"Indeed, I don't think it is my fault," she explained. "I was trying to amuse her, and I told her about the Miss Frazers, and then she began to sob and cry like this. I *am* so sorry. I am afraid she will be worse for this."

"She is often so," answered Mrs. Hamilton. "You need not blame yourself, dear Mary. It is the result of the great shock poor Cathy has had, and the doctors say she cannot help this irritable state. You must ask God to comfort her, for no one else can, and then her heart will be at peace."

This was how things went on at Fairfield for many months, and it was hard for every one of those who would have felt nothing *difficult* or burdensome which could give her

a moment's ease or joy; but even for them it was not so trying as it was to Catherine herself, for she was perfectly aware of her own irritability, and although it really seemed as if she "could not help it," she mourned exceedingly over every unkind word.

"What a pretence my love of God must have been," she would say to Father Austen sometimes. "Before this happened, I really and truly believed I would do *anything* He asked me—it seemed as if nothing could be too hard if I was quite sure it was His holy Will, and you see what is the end of it. I know this is our Lord's doing. I know that neither I nor any human creature has had anything to do with what has befallen me: it has come straight from God's hand, and yet my heart murmurs and rebels. Oh, Father, I never could have loved Him."

"Your love was not strong and generous, my child. I believe some day He will make it so. You are like most people, when a heavy trial comes — instead of sanctifying

them, its first effects are to bring out a number of faults and weak points which they never believed existed in their hearts. It is afterwards—when the sorrow has partly done its work — that you will feel it has been God's messenger to bring you nearer to Him."

"But it does *not* bring me nearer to Him," interrupted Cathy, impatiently. "I could bear even this—yes, I really believe I could—if I only felt it was drawing me to God. But it is taking me from Him," she added, sadly. "I am irritable and selfish, and give pain and trouble to all whom I love best; and though I pray and resolve, and try to be kind and thankful and patient, I break down a hundred times a day."

"And the breaking down is what God allows to make you humble," answered Father Austen. "While you feel every day and hour what an evil nature you possess, can't you understand how you *need* purifying; and if only this suffering could do that, will *you not* accept it?"

"I *must* accept it, I have no choice in it," said Catherine; and then, in her old frank manner, she added, "but I really would get out of it if I could, that is the truth, Father, though I know how wrong it is, how thankless and unfaithful. What *is* life without health?"

"Something to thank God for, Catherine. What you have to bear is heavy, but it will pass. To earthly joy and earthly suffering an end must come, and then how little our life will seem to us in the light of heaven. And your life is not worthless, it has been spared for the sake of others, as well as for your own soul."

"Oh, Father, you know that I can do nothing useful now."

Father Austen was silent a few minutes, so silent that Cathy exclaimed, "Please tell me what you are thinking of."

"I am thinking of you, and what a useful, happy life stretches out before you, if you will but grasp it."

"*Useful — happy,*" said Catherine, and there was an unspoken reproach in the very tone of her voice.

"Yes, both. I see that you may be in a more perfect way than before the sunshine of home, the one to whom all may come for sympathy and for kindness in every pleasure or pain. I see, too, that you have not lost the use of your hands, and my little school children are not yet independent of frocks and pinafores. You have quiet hours for reading and thought and prayer, which many of us in the full flow of life might almost envy you; and for all these opportunities of doing good to others and to yourself, you must account to God. Now, do you say you can do nothing?"

Catherine's sorrowful face had been gradually brightening, until, as Father Austen ceased to speak, a happy smile rested there, and it was with some of her old animation she exclaimed—

"*Father*, I really believe I might still

make a rule how to pass my day, and settle to fixed occupations, though I am lying here. Don't you think it would be a good plan?"

And the priest said "Yes," and thanked God, as he walked homewards, because He had roused up Catherine to see that she must not, even in pain and weakness, live for herself, but for His glory and the good of others.

The new rule worked well, and under its influence Cathy was beginning to be happier, and gradually the sad expression of her face passed away; and, in spite of being more pale and delicate, she was sufficiently "herself" to delight all who saw her. And then it became so much easier to be gentle and grateful and kind. The irritability had resulted chiefly from the constant fretting over her cross; and now Cathy gave herself no time for idle thoughts, but tried to turn them towards God and heaven. It had appeared to her as if the burden of life crushed her and kept her from God, whereas death would have brought her near Him; but gradually

faith and hope did their sweet work of healing, and she learned to trust God, although she could not understand the way He was leading her.

"Father," she said to the priest, one day when he found her lying in the twilight alone, but peaceful and happy, "I can never be sorry enough for all my hard thoughts of God. I feel now quite sure He would not have given me this cross unless He loved me, and though I can't say yet that if I had been told to choose I would ask no other life than to lie here always, I *can* say with all my heart that I am ready to bear it if only He will help me, and pardon me when I fail. Do you think the better, higher feeling will come to me, Father? I ask for it every day, for I do want to love and prize my cross, because it is God's gift to me."

"I am sure it will, my child, as all other good things have come, by prayer and patient waiting. But here comes your mamma, and *I shall invite* myself to tea."

Any one who heard their voices would have said they were a merry party in Catherine's room that evening, and she talked and laughed as much as any one, for it was what she termed one of her "good days," when her pain was less to bear. There were bad days in plenty, when neither reading or work or even much thinking was possible; but at such times Catherine would look at the Agony in the Garden, and murmur, "Dear Lord, help me to say, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'"

Many a day in those first weeks of impatient murmuring she would have given much to have turned that picture with its face to the wall, for it seemed almost to irritate her: now, as her mother had believed when she hung it on its nail, it was her help and encouragement when the cross pressed and hurt her. Truly God was very good to Catherine.

Chapter X.

IT was Catherine Hamilton's twenty-first birthday, and she was lying on the couch where she had been lying four long years, taking up one by one the pretty gifts which had been arranged on the table by her side, finding something to say in praise of every one and in love to the giver. Hers was a very sweet face now — not bright and sparkling, as it had been in her early girlhood, but on it there was a peace which was far more lovely, a reflection of the peace of heart which had sprung up by God's grace as she learned to conform herself to His Will.

"Mary, I have something to tell you," she said, as her old friend came in to offer

her good wishes. "We have heard from Frank this morning, and he says we must begin to work the vestments for his first Mass, as he hopes to be ordained in a few months' time. You know mamma has always said that all he wears then must be worked by us who love him. I shall expect your help, though, for there is scarcely sufficient time for all we want to accomplish."

"I shall like to do as much as you will let me, Cathy. I am so glad Frank is going to be a priest. If I had a brother, it would be my great wish for him."

"Yes," said Catherine. "I think most girls have that feeling: even if it changes as they grow older, it is the one idea as children. I can remember that Frank and I always arranged that he should be a priest and I a nun. Ah, well! *his* dream has come true," and a slight shade passed over her face as she ceased speaking.

"Poor Cathy," whispered Mary, taking *her hand*—which was thin and white now—

"it has been very hard for you, but you have borne it so bravely and nobly. How much God must love you!"

"Yes—indeed I know He does, Mary, but not because I have been brave. He loves me because He pities my weakness so, and because I am so sorry that I have ever had an ungenerous, ungrateful thought of Him. I wish you would not say such things of me, Mary. They would make me vexed with you if they did not bring humiliation with them. But suppose you tell me the news. I am quite sure by your eyes that you are brimming over with *something*."

"Cathy! how can you tell? However, I suppose you know me well by this time. I am full of something, but it is not news, not exactly, that is—I, I," and Mary stammered and blushed in a way which was quite a novelty.

"Dear Mary, you are quite mysterious. What can have happened?"

Mary's reply was to kneel down by Ca-

therine's couch, and, hiding her face, begin to cry quietly, protesting between her sobs that she was so happy—so very happy!

Catherine passed her hand gently over Mary's soft hair, and waited for her to speak; and after a while a low voice came from out of the sofa-cushions, saying,—

"Cathy, I want to tell you, but I am not sure if you will mind."

"Do not think of me at all, Mary. I can only be glad of anything which makes you happy. Please tell me, dear."

"Do you remember a long, long while ago, when first you were ill, that I made you cry so dreadfully by telling you about the two Frazers? I am afraid of giving you pain, again."

A quick thought passed through Catherine's mind. Surely Mary was going to tell that she too, like Laura Frazer, was about to be married!

"And have you made the same choice *as Laura?*" she said, gently. "Dear Mary,

I have known and loved you all my life, and if this is God's Will for you I am quite content."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mary, half laughing and half crying. "It is Jessie's choice which is mine. Cathy, I am almost afraid of what you will think. I know I have so many faults; I know I am so unworthy to belong to our Lord; but He can make me worthy," she added, reverently.

Catherine drew her nearer, with a tight, loving clasp. "God bless you, dear Mary; I can spare you to Him so gladly. But I am surprised, for I never knew you thought of such a life. Don't you remember how, five or six years ago, you persisted in saying you only wished to be a 'lady of the world'?"

"Yes, I remember; and it was true then. The very idea of being shut up in a convent would have been misery to me. It seems difficult to tell you how it first began, Cathy. Father Austen says it has all through been

God's doing, and that He has chosen me, and overcome my resistance. For I *did* resist Him. When I first began to understand that God was asking something, I used to think I would not listen, in case it should be against my inclinations. I really loved gaiety, and yet in the midst of the very happiest evening, God's voice seemed to tell me I had no place there — He called me to a different life. It went on so for a good while, Catherine—our Lord speaking to me so gently and lovingly, even though I turned away and almost begged Him to go farther off, and leave me happily in the world. Then I began to make bargains with Him, and promise to try and serve Him as perfectly as I could in any other state—but not as a nun. But still He pointed to that one way in which I should save my soul and sanctify myself; and at last I yielded, and said I would do what He willed, if He would only bear with me and make me better. That is more *than two* years ago, Catherine, and as soon

as I gave up resisting Him, a new life seemed to begin for me, and, gradually, what I had dreaded and disliked became my most intense desire."

"Dear Mary! what a struggle you have gone through, and I never guessed it."

"I wanted to tell you, Catherine—not at first, but later, when I really wished to be what our Lord asked of me. I think I should have been so much happier if I could have talked to you sometimes, but I was not sure that it might not pain you."

"I don't wonder, Mary; you had reason to remember the wrong and ungenerous way in which I spoke of Jessie Frazer. It shows me more than ever how much I made my friends suffer through my selfishness. But you have told me at last!"

"Yes, I was obliged to tell you now, because I wanted you to know it before any one, except papa and mamma. It is a week since Father Austen gave me leave to go next year, Catherine—in the spring."

"And this is autumn. I shall not have you long, Mary, but I am not going to complain. You in your path and I in mine shall both be doing God's Will, and that is all that can make us happy."

"Catherine," said Mary, "I want you to tell me one thing. Marion Lindsay desired that life always—as soon as she was old enough to understand—while I have fought against it, and been so long in giving my heart to God. Do you think mine is as true a vocation as hers?"

"Dear Mary, how can you ask such a thing? What *is* a vocation but God's call to you to follow Him in some particular way? It does not matter how it comes, or when it comes: it is sufficient that He has spoken, and we have only to obey. I don't know which is more beautiful — the fulfilment of Marion's childish longing and hope, or the laying down of Mary Leslie's will, to follow in the path God has pointed out for her."

Mary was silent for a while. "You will

pray for me, Cathy? and when the time comes, and I go away, you will not forget me."

"I could not, if I tried," said Catherine, smiling. "But, Mary, you haven't told me yet *where* you are going."

Mary blushed. "It seems as if it was all too high and holy for me. I can never thank God enough for pardoning me so much, and yet letting me belong to Him so closely. You will wonder, Catherine, that with my love of pleasure and comfort, I could never have any wish but for an austere order. I am hoping to be a Carmelite."

"It will be a beautiful life, Mary," and Catherine paused, as just a few tears glittered in her eyes. "But, no; I am not going to envy you! If God wants me to lie here, which He certainly does, I am content."

When Mary had gone home, and Catherine was left alone to think, the past seemed flitting before her, with her old friend mixed up in it all. She almost laughed over the

memory of some of their childish squabbles—it seemed such a little while since they had been playing at dolls and dolls' housekeeping together, reading the same books, and feeling wretched when they were separated. And then came school-days, with happy meetings in holidays, full of plans for the time when lessons should be over for ever. Then there was the break in their intimacy, but any pain *that* thought might bring was chased away by the pleasant realisations of the better and purer friendship which had sprung out of it, when they had tried to love and serve God together in real earnest. It seemed to Catherine that all in a moment she had gained a new knowledge of the change in Mary's character. Certainly she had seen how the old inclinations for gaiety and dress had been checked, how even the naturally sullen disposition had become sweeter and more forgiving, and this was the secret of it all; God had been surrounding Mary with *such love,* such grace, that He had won

her by degrees to give her whole heart to Him for ever.

Well, it was indeed true that all things were changing. Scarcely one home among her most intimate friends where separations had not come. Death had entered some few family circles, marriages and departures had happened in still more, the little children had become school-girls, and those who had been school-girls were settling in life. Even Fairfield was altered in those four years, for Winnie was away at Catherine's old convent school, and Cyril at college, with a firm determination to become a priest, after the example of his elder brother. Look where she might, Cathy saw written upon everything her old complaint, "Nothing lasts." But it was no longer a matter for grieving—she was beginning to learn how to accept every trifling incident of life as coming by God's arrangement or permission, and she felt sure He knew better than she did.

Winter passed quickly, bringing Winnie

and Cyril for Christmas—one of those quiet Christmas times they had always kept since Dr. Hamilton's death; and then it seemed that spring came directly, and Catherine and Mary Leslie were separated. If there was much pain for them both in the parting, there was still more of pleasure, because they both loved God too truly not to rejoice at the cause which separated them; and many prayers were offered from Catherine's sofa for the perseverance of her earliest friend in the life she had chosen, while Mary never forgot to thank God that He had given her an example and help like Catherine had been to her.

It seemed after that as if everything settled down into a quiet routine, with no special event to interrupt it. Cathy and Mrs. Hamilton spent peaceful days together, with good news at intervals from the absent ones, and bright happy letters from Frank, in the first glow of joy and gratitude for his priesthood, all burning with desire to be consumed for *God's glory*.

People were getting so accustomed to see Catherine Hamilton an invalid, that no one noticed how much more delicate she looked, and how her weakness slowly but surely increased—excepting her mother, and *she* tried to believe herself mistaken.

There were moments when in sudden fear she would question Catherine, and beg her to say if she was suffering more; but she only got the same quiet answer, "No, mamma, dear—the pain is not worse, and I am very well." Yet it suddenly broke upon every one at last that there was a great change. I doubt if any of those who watched her most closely could have told exactly when she began to give up one little occupation after another, not complainingly, not idly, but as one whose work was nearly done.

She had, indeed, laboured well on her couch of pain. The poor round that part would have told you that "Miss Catherine" had been even a better friend to them in sickness than in health, for she was always ready

to listen to their troubles and anxieties, always prompt to relieve and comfort them whenever it was possible. Many a priest in some poor little country mission offered Masses for the unknown donor of what was needed for the use of the altar, which had been made with so much happiness by Catherine, who thanked God for letting her work for Him thus. Many a poor orphan child owed to her its rescue from poverty, ignorance, and perhaps sin. Yes, in sickness and suffering, Cathy had found her life-work. No great work, no glowing deeds, such as she had dreamed of in young, untried days, but she had used her time and opportunities and talents to their utmost for Christ's love; and the laying down of all desire had been in itself the hardest service, though it also brought with it an untold sweetness.

It was seven years since the merry picnic to the old ruined castle, the day when health and hope and joy seemed to die out for *Catherine* Hamilton; but a happier, more

peaceful day had dawned for her, after the first brief darkness. The impulsive hasty spirit was gone now, the proud strong will had been long given up to God, and suffering had done its work, for Catherine was another creature—"a new creature in Jesus Christ." Why should she live longer? He who loved her had but laid her low, that she might the more quickly be made ready for the life eternal, and the time had come for her to be set free from pain and weakness.

Towards the last, Mrs. Hamilton and Cathy often spoke together of what was coming, of the light and love of that future world where they hoped to be reunited some day after a brief separation. "And, mamma, I hope I shall die almost suddenly," said Catherine. "I think it would be better and easier for you if the end comes when you are not watching for it. Still, I trust it may be upon one of those days when Father Austen has brought me Holy Communion."

She had her wish. For when all thought

her better than she had been for many weeks, Catherine passed away without a sign, or word, or struggle—so peacefully, that those who watched by her believed that she was sleeping, long after her spirit was released. That morning she had received her Lord with faith and love, and in the evening He took her to Himself.

This was the quiet ending of the quiet life God had chosen for Cathy Hamilton. He knew her longing aspirations to do great things for Him, to accomplish some special work for His glory; but it was His Will that she should lay them all down at the foot of the Cross, and there learn that greatest of all lessons, to suffer and be still. And though at first the way had seemed too steep and rough, and the burden heavier than she could carry, Jesus met her in that narrow path, and then the thorns turned to flowers and the pain to joy — a joy far sweeter than she had ever imagined.

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